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Around Theatres

I

Max Beerbohm

AROUND THEATRES

This edition of the Works of Max Beerbohm is limited to seven hundred and eighty sets, of which seven hundred and fifty are for sale and thirty for presentation.
"Around Theatres" I. is the eighth volume of the edition.

AROUND THEATRES

BY

MAX BEERBOHM

VOL. I.

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

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EPISTLE DEDICATORY

to

EDWARD GORDON CRAIG

My dear Ted,—

Will you accept the dedication of a book of mine? Don't bother to write. Just give a verbal answer, Yes or No, to the bearer of this.

As your house is within a stone's throw of mine, you may wonder, "Why does he write?—why doesn't he come round and ask me by word of mouth?" My reason is that it is difficult for so good-natured a fellow as you to refuse anything to a friend pleading *in propria persona*. My faltering voice, my appealing gaze, would move you to say Yes, and have done with it. "Perhaps," you rejoin; "but why such a huge *long* letter? My time is precious. Must I read it *all?*" No; you need not do that. You need only skim through it. I merely want you to know what manner of book it is, before you make your decision. And I can't describe it in two words.

The very fact that a book needs a description by its author is a bad sign. I agree with you there. A book ought to be able to stand by itself. I think my other books do so. But I have my doubts about this one.

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

No doubt I have mentioned to you more than once, in the vein of maudlin reminiscence, that I was at one time a dramatic critic; but I don't think you have ever said that you had read any of my articles. There the articles were, nevertheless, in "The Saturday Review," week by week. And there were a great many of them. I went on for twelve whole years. On and on I went, doggedly, from the age of twenty-five to the age of thirty-seven. It seems incredible; but it is a fact. And it is also a fact that in the fourteen years that have elapsed since I turned aside from that hard straight stony path, many people have told me that I ought to make a selection from those old articles—make a book of them. I used to say I would think of it; but I didn't really mean to think of it: the idea seemed to me a trifle ghastly. I have a reverence for literature. For journalism I have merely a kind regard. I had never scamped my job on "The Saturday;" but I shrank from the notion of burrowing down among those conscientious old efforts and bringing up some of them to be read in broad daylight, by the present generation, between the covers of a book. However, when it was arranged that there should be a limited edition of my "works," I agreed that a volume or two of my dramatic criticism might be slipped into it. One *might* offer to just a few well-disposed people what one would tenderly withhold from the judgment of the vast cold world.

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

Should there be one volume or two? That was among the many questions that I asked myself while I groped through the purlieus of my hideous past. In course of time I decided (let me break the news to you gently) on the double measure. It isn't merely one volume that I wish to gild by connexion with your name; it's two. But you need only say No once.

Had my form been very uneven in those old weekly screeds, the favour that I now ask of you would be half its actual size. Had I sometimes written trash, and at other times deserved favourable comparison with Lessing, I could have made one chaste volume of my best things. "Behold," I could have said, "in this small compass, the fine fruit of twelve years' work!" But, as it is, if I were to offer only a little of my best, any one reading it would exclaim, "Is *this* all he has to show for all that labour?" Which would be rather unfair to me. For among what I had suppressed there would be quite as much of my best as in what I had revealed.

The general evenness of my work for "The Saturday"—my seldom-sinking and alas-never-soaring way—has made the task of selection a hard one. The comparative importance or unimportance of the theme of this and that article was no guide to me. I had decided that I must choose the articles as in themselves (such as they were) they were. Whether the play I had criticised were by Shakespeare or by Mr. Tomkins must not matter to me. *I* was

what I must bear in mind. And I fear I had always preferred Mr. Tomkins, as a theme, to Shakespeare. I felt more at home with him, and wrote better about him. That is a drawback of the satiric temperament; and I deplore it. But I have had to take my articles as I found them. And if in the two forthcoming volumes the name of Tomkins is mentioned overmuch, I can't help it. The defect is inherent in me. My readers (among whom you will not be one) must take me as I am, at what I suppose to be my best—or my least bad; and I even crave their sympathy for me in all the pains I have taken to judge, among five hundred articles or so, where my least bad came in.

What is in these volumes is just as it was aforetime in "The Saturday," save that here and there I have corrected a slip in grammar or a misprint, and have often deleted at the end of an article some rather perfunctory compliments or reproofs to the performers of the play I had written about—or, as mostly happened, the play I had taken as a peg to hang some general disquisition on. Needless to say that with many of the things I said about life and art and manners and morals and what-not I entirely disagree now. I should feel sad if my mind hadn't developed at all in later years. It certainly was developing in the course of my twelve years' bondage to dramatic criticism. If ever you do dip into the books, I advise you to start at about the year 1901. So as not to offend my earlier self by leaving it

unrepresented, I have begun at the year 1898. But I do think I improved as I went on.

One thing I never could, from first to last, make up my mind about; and that thing was the most salient phenomenon "around theatres" in my day: "G. B. S." Did I love his genius or hate it? You, of course, survey it from the firm rock of your ideals. I wish I had had a rock of some sort. I went wavering hither and thither in the strangest fashion, now frankly indignant, now full of enthusiasm, now piling reservation on reservation, and then again frankly indignant. My vicissitudes in the matter of G. B. S. were lamentable. But they amuse me very much. The satiric temperament again.

As for *your* genius, I've never had any misgivings about that. Would that I could have expressed my admiration worthily! I've found only one article of mine about you that isn't far below the mark. That is one of the reasons why I should like to dedicate these two volumes to you. May I? Don't be influenced by my wish. Make your decision according to your own feelings. But for Heaven's sake *make* it, my dear Ted. The bearer waits.

Your affectionate old friend and neighbour,

Max Beerbohm.

Villino Chiaro, Rapallo. *1924.*

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WHY I OUGHT NOT TO HAVE BECOME A DRAMATIC CRITIC

May 28, 1898.

EVERY one delighted in G. B. S. Even they who were his targets snatched an awful joy in the illicit study of his writings, and will have heaved a sigh, not wholly of relief, at the news of his resignation. I am disappointed by that stroke of fate which has eclipsed the gaiety of green-rooms. Of all his readers none mourns G. B. S. more inconsolably than I, his pious successor. For, with all his faults—grave though they are and not to be counted on the fingers of one hand—he is, I think, by far the most brilliant and remarkable journalist in London, and, in succeeding him, I labour not merely under my own modesty, but also under the impatience of the public before me. I am in the predicament of the minor music-hall artiste sent on as an "extra-turn," tremulously facing the prolonged thunder of calls for the "star" who has just sung. A pathetic smile, a little gesture of appeal—and the thunder, still rumbling round the distant gallery, gradually subsides. My voice is audible at length. But it is not much of a voice. My song, also, is not much of a song.

I will not raise in my readers hopes which I cannot

realise for them. It is best to be quite frank. Frankly, I have none of that instinctive love for the theatre which is the first step towards good criticism of drama. I am not fond of the theatre. Dramatic art interests and moves me less than any of the other arts. I am happy among pictures, and, being a constant intruder into studios, have learnt enough to know that I know nothing whatever about painting—knowledge which, had I taken to what is called "art-criticism," would have set me head-and-shoulders above the great majority of my colleagues. Of music I have a genuine, though quite unenlightened, love. Literature I love best of all, and I have some knowledge of its technicalities. I can talk intelligently about it. I have my little theories about it. But in drama I take, unfortunately, neither emotional nor intellectual pleasure. I am innocent of any theories on the subject. I shall have to vamp up my first principles as I go along, and they will probably be all wrong and all dull. For I have never even acquired any lore in this kind of criticism. I could not test a theory nor quote a line of Hazlitt, Lamb, Lewes and the rest, whose essays in dramatic criticism I have never read. I have, however, a fragmentary recollection of Aristotle's fragment on the drama, which I read for "Mods." The examiners, if I remember rightly, marked my paper "gamma-minus-query"—a clear proof that even in my adolescence I was not stage-struck. Ignorance of

the ideas expressed by previous critics is not, I admit, in itself a grave defect. It may even be an advantage, as making cerebration compulsory, and so giving freshness to one's style. Likewise, I can imagine that a man who had never been in a theatre might, were he suddenly sent forth as a dramatic critic, be able to write really charming and surprising and instructive things about the stage. But my readers must not look for any freshness or cerebration from me. I could find my way blindfold about every theatre in the metropolis, and could recite backwards most of the successful plays that have been produced in the last ten years. Though I have no theoretic knowledge of the drama, I am a rich mine of theatrical gossip, and I know (and do not dispute) all the current judgments on actor Tom, playwright Dick, and stage-manager Harry. Out of my very cradle I stepped upon the fringe of the theatrical world, and my familiarity with the theatre has been a matter of circumstance rather than of choice. I remember being really bored by a play on the evening of my tenth birthday. That a visit to the theatre can be regarded, as it is regarded by some men to their dying day, as a treat, has always bewildered and baffled my imagination. In the whole world, no phenomenon is so inexplicable to me as a queue of men and women at a pit-door. I am not, fortunately, a person of expensive habits, but I confess that I have never regarded any theatre as much more than the conclusion to a

dinner or the prelude to a supper. It appals me to think that in future I shall be obliged to keep my attention fixed, never taking my eyes from the stage except to make a note upon my cuff. I, who have never left a theatre with any definite impression of pleasure or displeasure, am curious to know how on earth I am going to fill so much as half a column of this paper, week by week, with my impressions. My self-respect and my ignorance of bygone formulæ of drama will prevent me from the otherwise easy task of being an academic critic. I shall not be able to branch off, like G. B. S., into discussions of ethical, theological or political questions, for on such questions I am singularly ill-informed. I have not that well-considered attitude towards life which gave a kind of unity to G. B. S.'s worst inconsistencies about art. In a word, I don't quite know what to do with the torch that G. B. S. has handed to me.

Of the literary quality in any play, I shall perhaps be able to say something, but I shall be hopelessly out of my depth in criticising the play itself. The mere notion of criticising the players simply terrifies me, not because I know (as, indeed, I do) nothing about the art of acting, but because I have the pleasure of personal acquaintance with so many players. One well-known player and manager is my near relative. Who will not smile if I praise him? How could I possibly disparage him? Will it not be hard for me to praise his rivals? If I do

anything but praise them, what will become of the purity of the Press? Most of the elder actors have patted me on the head and given me sixpence when I was "only *so* high." Even if, with an air of incorruptibility, I now return them their sixpences, they will yet expect me to pat *them* on the head in the "Saturday Review." Many of the younger actors were at school with me. They will expect me to criticise them as an old playmate should. With most of the others I have, at least, a nodding acquaintance. To one of them I had nodded so often that, only the other day, we wrote a play together—a play which, by the way, no manager will now be able to accept, lest he be thought venal. How can I criticise the acting of a collaborator? If I do not care for one of his impersonations, how can I do aught but write an eulogy in these columns and put my true opinion into a sealed envelope to be opened after my decease and immediately destroyed? My whole position is unfortunate. I have the satiric temperament: when I am laughing at any one I am generally rather amusing, but when I am praising any one, I am always deadly dull. Now, such is the weakness of my character that I cannot say in print anything against a personal acquaintance. I think I have met all the habitual playwrights in my time. Therefore, in criticising an average production, I shall be obliged to confine myself to slating such members of the cast as I have never met. If they have acted well,

this will undoubtedly be hard on them. Even if they have not acted well—and I for one shall not know whether they have or not—their punishment will be out of all due proportion. The only advice I can offer them, meanwhile, is that they should make haste and meet me.

It has struck me, in reading this article, that I have not given my readers much hope of edification. Let them console themselves with the reflection that they are less to be pitied than I am. I shall miss G. B. S. quite as much as they will, and they will not be compelled to read the articles which I *shall* be compelled to write. This absurd post which I have accepted will interfere with my freedom in life, and is quite likely to spoil and exhaust such talent as I might otherwise be exercising in literary art. However, I will not complain. The Editor of this paper has come to me as Romeo came to the apothecary, and what he wants I give him for the apothecary's reason. I daresay that there are many callings more uncomfortable and dispiriting than that of dramatic critic. To be a porter on the Underground Railway must, I have often thought, be very terrible. Whenever I feel myself sinking under the stress of my labours, I shall say to myself, "I am not a porter on the Underground Railway."

"CYRANO DE BERGERAC"

July 9, 1898.

THE tricolour floats over the Lyceum, and the critics are debating, with such animation as they can muster (at the fag-end of an arduous season) for a play written in a language to which they secretly prefer their own, whether "Cyrano" be a classic. Paris has declared it to be a classic, and, international courtesy apart, July is not the month for iconoclasm. And so the general tendency is to accept "Cyrano" in the spirit in which it has been offered to us. I myself go with that tendency. Even if I could, I would not whisk from the brow of M. Rostand, the talented boy-playwright, the laurels which Paris has so reverently imposed on it. For, even if "Cyrano" be not a classic, it is at least a wonderfully ingenious counterfeit of one, likely to deceive experts far more knowing than I am. M. Rostand is not a great original genius like (for example) M. Maeterlinck. He comes to us with no marvellous revelation, but he is a gifted, adroit artist, who does with freshness and great force things that have been done before; and he is, at least, a monstrous fine fellow. His literary instinct is almost as remarkable as his instinct for the *technique*—the *pyrotechnique*—of the theatre, inso-

much that I can read "Cyrano" almost as often, with almost as much pleasure, as I could see it played. Personally, I like the Byzantine manner in literature better than any other, and M. Rostand is nothing if not Byzantine: his lines are loaded and encrusted with elaborate phrases and curious conceits, which are most fascinating to any one who, like me, cares for such things. Yet, strange as it seems, none of these lines is amiss in the theatre. All the speeches blow in gusts of rhetoric straight over the footlights into the very lungs of the audience. Indeed, there is this unusual feature in M. Rostand's talent, that he combines with all the verbal preciosity of extreme youth the romantic ardour and technical accomplishment of middle-age. Hence the comparative coldness with which he is regarded in Paris by *les jeunes*, who naturally do not like to scratch Mallarmé and find Sardou. Not the debased Sardou himself has the dramaturgic touch more absolutely than has M. Rostand. But M. Rostand is not, like M. Sardou, a mere set of fingers with the theatre at the tips of them. On the contrary, he is a brain and a heart and all sorts of good things which atone for—or, rather, justify—the fact that "Cyrano" is of the stage stagey. It is rather silly to chide M. Rostand for creating a character and situations which are unreal if one examine them from a non-romantic standpoint. It is silly to insist, as one or two critics have insisted, that Cyrano was a fool and a blackguard,

in that he entrapped the lady of his heart into marriage with a vapid impostor. The important and obvious point is that Cyrano, as created by M. Rostand, is a splendid hero of romance. If you have any sensibility to romance, you admire him so immensely as to be sure that whatever he may have done was for the best. All the characters and all the incidents in the play have been devised for the glorification of Cyrano, and are but, as who should say, so many rays of lime-light converging upon him alone. And that is as it should be. The romantic play which survives the pressure of time is always that which contains some one central figure, to which everything is subordinate—a one-part play, in other words. The part of Cyrano is one which, unless I am much mistaken, the great French actor in every future generation will desire to play. Cyrano will soon crop up in opera and in ballet. Cyrano is, in fact, as inevitably a fixture in romance as Don Quixote or Don Juan, Punch or Pierrot. Like them, he will never be out of date. But prophecy is dangerous? Of course it is. That is the whole secret of its fascination. Besides, I have a certain amount of reason in prophesying on this point. Realistic figures perish necessarily with the generation in which they were created, and their place is taken by figures typical of the generation which supervenes. But romantic figures belong to no period, and time does not dissolve them. Already Ibsen is rather out of date—even

Mr. Archer has washed his hands of Ibsen—while the elder Dumas is still thoroughly in touch with the times. Cyrano will survive because he is practically a new type in drama. I know that the motives of self-sacrifice-in-love and of beauty-adored-by-a-grotesque are as old, and as effective, as the hills, and have been used in literature again and again. I know that self-sacrifice is the motive of most successful plays. But, so far as I know, beauty-adored-by-a-grotesque has never been used with the grotesque as stage-hero. At any rate it has never been used so finely and so tenderly as by M. Rostand, whose hideous swashbuckler with the heart of gold and the talent for improvising witty or beautiful verses—Caliban + Tartarin + Sir Galahad + Theodore Hook was the amazing recipe for his concoction—is far too novel, I think, and too convincing, and too attractive, not to be permanent. Whether, in the meantime, Cyrano's soul has, as M. Rostand gracefully declares, passed into "vous, Coquelin," I am not quite sure. I should say that some of it—the comic, which is, perhaps, the greater part of it—has done so. But I am afraid that the tragic part is still floating somewhere, unembodied. Perhaps the two parts will never be embodied together in the same actor. Certainly, the comic part will never have a better billet than its first.

I have said that the play is unlikely to suffer under the lapse of time. But though it has no

special place in time, in space it has its own special place. It is a work charged with its author's nationality, and only the compatriots of its author can to the full appreciate it. Much of its subtlety and beauty must necessarily be lost upon us others. To translate it into English were a terrible imposition to set any one, and not even the worst offender in literature deserves such a punishment. To adapt it were harder than all the seven labours of Hercules rolled into one, and would tax the guile and strength of even Mr. Louis Parker. The characters in the "Chemineau" had no particular racial characteristics, and their transportation to Dorsetshire did them no harm. But there is no part of England which corresponds at all to the Midi. An adapter of "Cyrano" might lay the scene in Cornwall, call the play "Then shall Cyrano die?" and write in a sixth act with a chorus of fifty thousand Cornishmen bent on knowing the reason why, or he might lay it in any of the other characteristic counties of England, but I should not like to answer for the consequences. However, the play will of course be translated as it stands. And, meanwhile, no one should neglect this opportunity of seeing the original production. There is so much action in the piece, and the plot itself is so simple, that even those who know no French at all can enjoy it. And the whole setting of the piece is most delightful. I was surprised on the first night to see how excellent was the stage management. Except a pair of restive

and absurd horses, there was no hitch, despite the difference of the Lyceum and the Porte Saint Martin. Why, by the way, are real horses allowed on the stage, where their hoofs fall with a series of dull thuds which entirely destroy illusion? Cardboard horses would be far less of a nuisance and far more convincing. However, that is a detail. I wish all my readers to see "Cyrano." It may not be the masterpiece I think it, but at any rate it is one's money's-worth. The stalls are fifteen shillings a-piece, but there are five acts, and all the five are fairly long, and each of them is well worth three shillings. Even if one does not like the play, it will be something, hereafter, to be able to bore one's grandchildren by telling them about Coquelin as Cyrano.

"MACBETH"

October 1, 1898.

SHAKESPEARE had his short-comings. Love of him does not blind me to his limitations and his faults of excess. But, after all, the man is dead, and I do not wish to emulate that captious and rancorous spirit—inflamed, as it often seemed to me, by an almost personal animosity—in which my predecessor persecuted him beyond the grave. *Nil de mortuis nisi bonum*, say I: else, what is to become of the classics? In that they were directed against one who could not defend himself, I regarded Mr. Shaw's attacks as cowardly; in that Mr. Shaw was a dramatist himself, I regarded them as suspect. Yet would I have heartily approved of them, had I imagined that they would induce managers not to revive certain of Shakespeare's plays quite so frequently. But I have just said that defamation of the dead will tend to destroy the classics. And so it may, if it be used discreetly. And if it do, so much the better for Shakespeare. When a play has become a classic in drama, it ceases to be a play. It may become a classic in literature without any detriment to itself, but, when it becomes also, like "Hamlet" or "Romeo and Juliet" or "Macbeth," a classic in drama, all, if I may be allowed to say so,

is up with it. One of the reasons for the recent success of "Julius Cæsar" was that so few persons had ever seen "Julius Cæsar" acted. The characters and the situations were moving and impressive, were, in a word, dramatic, because, not having seen them more times than one would care to count, one did not know them all by heart; one saw the play as a play and so derived æsthetic pleasure from it. Now that the dramatic qualities of "Julius Cæsar" have been demonstrated, it will be revived often in various theatres. Seeing how good are the parts of Antony, Brutus and Cassius, eminent actors will always be seizing an opportunity to play them. The thing will become a classic in drama, and one will be able to regard it only as a vehicle for acting. One will be as deadly familiar with the forum-scene as with the screen-scene in "The School of Scandal," or the balcony-scene in "Romeo and Juliet." All its dramatic savour will have been lost. Its interest will be merely histrionic:—"Is Mr. * so powerful as **?—you never saw **? Ah, what a performance! Not so subtle as ***'s perhaps—but oh! the way he said 'Was this ambition?' He just put his hand in his toga and—why, * holds his hand straight in front of him—misses the whole point of it! For my own part, I always thought that, in some respects, ****'s idea—" . . . Nothing could be drearier than this kind of comparative criticism; yet a classic play makes it quite inevitable. The

play is dead. The stage is crowded with ghosts. Every head in the auditorium is a heavy casket of reminiscence. Play they never so wisely, the players cannot lay those circumambient ghosts nor charm those well-packed caskets to emptiness. "Hamlet" and "Romeo" and "Macbeth" can be revived, but not in the literal sense of the word: live again they do not, nor will they ever do so, unless all managers—metropolitan, suburban and provincial—enter into a solemn compact not to revive them for a period of (say) thirty years. Give us but time to forget them and their interpreters, and then they will once more be plays. At present they are but so many parts and so many scenes, so many tests and traps for eminent mimes. For the sake of those mimes no less than for the sake of Shakespeare, let all managers forthwith enter into the compact which I have suggested.

Of all Shakespeare's plays, "Macbeth" is, perhaps, the most often enacted. It is the only one that contains two great parts, each of which, susceptible of many interpretations, can be equally well fitted to the temperaments and methods of various mimes. According to Aubrey the play was first acted in 1606, at Hampton Court, in the presence of King James. It is stated that Hal Berridge, the youth who was to have acted the part of Lady Macbeth, "fell sudden sicke of a pleurisie, wherefor Master Shakespeare himself did enacte in his stead." One wishes that Aubrey

had given some account of the poet's impersonation. It would be amusing to know Shakespeare's own view of the part—more amusing, however, than valuable, for the actor is the interpreter of the dramatist, and the creative artist is always the least competent interpreter of his own work; besides, as I have said, there can be no final or binding interpretation of so complex a part as Lady Macbeth. Different actresses will always act the part in their different ways, and every way will have its champions among the critics, and every champion will have right on his side. Meanwhile, I find the Macbeth controversy rather tedious. Most critics of the latest production have been talking nonsense about the *zeitgeist* and about neurotic subtlety and Pre-Raphaelitism and all the rest of it, as though the play had hitherto been acted only in the blood-and-thunder convention of Mrs. Siddons. Mere fallacy! We may be sure that "the gentle poet-philosopher" himself acted in much the same way as Mrs. Patrick Campbell or, for that matter, Miss Ellen Terry. In Pepys' diary, too, there is certain evidence that Mrs. Knipp's famous impersonation was of much the same kind as that which our critics suppose to be a strange phenomenon of 1898. "Thence to the Cockpitt Theatre," writes Pepys in the autumn of 1667, "to witness my dearest M^rs^ Knipp in the Tragedie of Macbeth, than which as I did this day say to M^r^ Killigrew I do know no play more diverting

nor more worthie to the eye. Did secure a prime place in the pitt, whereof I was glad, being neare under my Ladie Dorset and her good husband. The latter did twice salute me with effusion, and I was pleased to note that those around me perceived this. Methought Mrs Knipp did never play so fine, specially in the matter of the two daggers, yet without brawl or overmuch tragick gesture, the which is most wearisome, as though an actress do care more to affright us than to be approved. She was most comickal and natural when she walks forth sleeping (the which I can testify, for Mrs Pepys also walks sleeping at some times), and did most ingeniously mimick the manner of women who walk thus." Obviously, then, the critics are wrong in regarding Mrs. Campbell's performance as something peculiar to the spirit of this generation. In the sleep-walking scene, Mrs. Campbell was not "comickal," but she was very "natural," and throughout the play she made her appeal to the sense of beauty and to the intellect rather than to the sense of terror. Mr. Forbes Robertson acted in a similar way. Both took the line laid down for them by their natural method. I thought that both performances were very beautiful. It does not matter in what method Macbeth and Lady Macbeth be played, so long as they be both played well in the same method. A violent Lady Macbeth and a gentle Macbeth, or *vice versâ*, would be a nuisance. Mrs. Campbell and Mr. Forbes Robertson

act in perfect harmony. Mr. Taber is most admirable as Macduff. Indeed, the whole production is a great success. I trust that it will be the latest production of " Macbeth " for many years to come.

AT THE TIVOLI

December 3, 1898.

A LADY of heroic proportions, accoutred as a life-guardsman, strode upon the stage just as I was edging my way to my seat. There was patriotism in her every curve, and I presume that her song, to which I did not listen, was about the Twenty-First Lancers. My thoughts were far away, coursing sentimentally through the Past and lingering among the many evenings I had frittered at the Tivoli in the period of earlier youth. Here, in these very stalls, I would often sit with some coaeval *in statu pupillari*. Lordly aloof, both of us, from the joyous vulgarity of our environment, we would talk in under-tones about Hesiod and Fra Angelico, about the lyric element in Marcus Aurelius and the ethics of apostasy as illustrated by the Oxford Movement. Now and again, in the pauses of our conversation, we would rest our eyes upon the stage and listen to a verse or two of some song about a mother-in-law or an upstairs-lodger, and then one of us would turn to the other, saying, "Yes! I see your point about poor Newman, but . . . ." or "I cannot admit that there is any real distinction between primitive art and . . . ." Though our intellects may not have been so monstrous fine as we pretended, we

were quite honest in so far as neither of us could have snatched any surreptitious pleasure in the entertainment as such. We came simply that we might bask in the glow of our own superiority—superiority not only to the guffawing clowns and jades around us, but also to the cloistral pedascules who, no more exquisite than we in erudition, were not in touch with modern life and would have been scared, like so many owls, in that garish temple of modernity, a Music Hall, wherein we, on the other hand, were able to sit without blinking. Were we, after all, so very absurd? It was one of our aims to be absurd. Besides, does not every man see something absurd in the things he did four or five years ago? Assuredly, that is a law of nature. A man may not have progressed in intellect—he may even have deteriorated—but he cannot regard himself, as he was, without some measure of contempt. I fancy that even an octogenarian must (if his memory be unimpaired) think that he was rather an ass at the age of seventy. Men who paint pictures or write books or produce anything that abides tangibly with them, may look at their old work and find much that is good in it; but, the greater their admiration, the greater their wonder that they, being what they were, contrived to do it. I myself was reading lately a little essay on Music Halls, written by me in the period to which I have alluded. I find it excellent. Yet I can but blush for the fatuous creature I was in the

days when I wrote it—just as I shall be blushing, five years hence, at my present personality, in which I cannot now detect any flaw.

The foregoing words are a more or less amplified version of the reverie I indulged in while the lady of heroic proportions held the rest of her audience in spell. The loud applause in which, at length, she marched off the stage, also put a term to my reverie. I remembered that I had come, not for the old purpose of being superior, but to lay the foundations for an article. And so I listened attentively to Mr. Tom Costello. I do not remember what either of his songs was about. I remember only that he wore two false noses, one for each song. It is one of the old traditions of an English Music Hall that the male comedians must make themselves as unsightly as they can. Indeed, ugliness, physical or moral, always seems to be the chief feature of the characters represented by the male artistes. The aim of the Music Hall is, in fact, to cheer the lower classes up by showing them a life uglier and more sordid than their own. The mass of people, when it seeks pleasure, does not want to be elevated: it wants to laugh at something beneath its own level. Just as I used to go to Music Halls that I might feel my superiority to the audience, so does the audience go that it may compare itself favourably with the debased rapscallions of the songs. Perhaps this theory would apply even better to the case of the outlying Music

Halls, where there is no prosperous element in the audience. At the Tivoli most of the audience is prosperous. Music Halls have become, in recent years, a feature of the "West End," a rival to the theatres. Gradually, they are becoming less and less Music Halls in the old sense—places, I mean, where songs are sung in succession throughout the evening. The "turns" are now interspersed with such items as juggling, bell-ringing, limb-contorting. The Tivoli is in a state of transition. But the old convention—the convention of unalloyed ugliness—still lingers and will, I fancy, die hard. It is significant that most of the younger men on the Music Hall stage adhere strictly to the old convention. The most gifted and popular of these younger men, Mr. George Robey (who was educated at Cambridge and is, in my opinion, one of the few distinguished men produced by Cambridge within recent years), nightly presents himself in the most hideous guise and makes the most hideous noises. Shortly after Mr. Robey's "turn," the other night, appeared Mr. T. E. Dunville, whom I saw for the first time. He is, in all respects, a replica of Mr. Robey. He has the same kind of make-up, the same kind of manner—the Cambridge manner, I suppose—and the same kind of songs. Evidently the old convention has life in it. Personally, I do not like it. I can bear it from Mr. Dan Leno—genius reconciles one to anything. From Mr. Robey, clever as he is, and from Mr. Dunville, it jars on me. At the

same time, it is interesting; also, it seems to give great pleasure; and so no student of life can afford to ignore it. And I feel that, in saying that I dislike it, I may be betraying my own limitations. I hasten, therefore, to say that I yield to none in my enjoyment of that fatuousness which, in the old convention, is as necessary to the songs sung by women as is ugliness to the songs sung by men. Who (I have often wondered) writes the words? Of the rate at which they are written I had an interesting glimpse not long ago, in the report of a case in the County Court at Brighton. The defendant, asked by the Judge to state his occupation, said that he wrote the words of songs for Music Halls, receiving the sum of one pound for every song. Asked how much he made in the course of a year, he replied simply, "Three hundred and sixty-five pounds." I blame the Judge for not having pushed his inquiries further. I should have liked to know something of the spirit in which the defendant wooed his Muse. Was it a rough wooing, for the most part, or a timid? Was she never coy? Would he say that on some days she yielded to him with greater ardour than on others? Did he discriminate between the fruits of their union, regarding this one as fine, that one as puny? Would he hotly maintain that some of his songs were underrated by the public, and others esteemed beyond their deserts? Would he give a fig for what the public thought of his work, or did he, in the silence

of his Study, strive only to please himself and to satisfy his own conscience? If he did sometimes write merely to tickle the ears of the groundlings, did he find the groundlings knowing by some subtle instinct of their own that he had trifled with them, and refusing to react to his humour or his pathos? I think it probable that all the really successful songs are written in straight sincerity, to the utmost of the writers' powers. And yet—I don't know.

In the lane where the violets nestle,
  In the lane where the lilies grow,
When Jack comes home from his vessel
  He will meet me again, I know.
Hand in hand we will wander together,
  For his heart beats true, it is plain;
On the deep blue sea he is waiting for me
  And the day when we'll meet in the lane.

That was the song sung by Elementary Jane, in Mr. Richard Pryce's delightful novel; and in real life, I am sure, it would go as straight to the heart of the public as it did in the book. Yet Mr. Pryce is far from being an unsophisticated writer. "Since I came to London" was sung by one of Jane's elder rivals, and I wish Mr. Pryce had not kept it to himself. Its sprightliness must have been so traditional, so restful—something in the manner of what Miss Alice Lloyd was singing at the Tivoli the other night:

AT THE TIVOLI

You don't know you're alive !
  That's so—oh, no !
A girl like you of twenty-one,
  Nothing done, and had no fun !
You say you've never heard
  How many beans make five ?
It's time you knew a thing or two—
  You don't know you're alive !

That is exquisitely in the tradition. But for my own part I adore the sprightly style less than the pathetic.

MORE IN SORROW——

January 14, 1899.

I WISH this were an illustrated paper. There are situations which can be described so much better with a pencil than with a pen, and one of these, pre-eminently, is the situation I found last Saturday at the Globe Theatre. I wish my Editor would accept, instead of the following article, the cartoon I drew on Sunday morning. "Going back to 'School'" is its title, and it represents the British Public, as Mr. Bultitude *in toga puerili*, being received by Mr. John Hare, as Dr. Grimstone. Prettily suggested in it are the speechless indignation and reluctance of the former figure, the dreadful geniality of the latter. It lies before me as I write, mocking and paralysing "the hand that wields the pen."

I have seen few things more melancholy, more spectral, than the first night of "School." What an atmosphere of stale perfume pervaded it! The freshness and sweetness of 1869 all withered, desiccated, yet given to us with a light pretence that it was the same as ever! "Time—The Present," said the unblushing programme. "Scene—A Glade in the Forest." One looked at the Glade and saw that it had been painted

to represent the verdure of midsummer. Yet I vow there was a rustle of dead leaves whenever any of the players crossed the stage. "1869. Very curious." "1869. An unique specimen."—Such were the labels affixed to those modern costumes in which the players strutted with so false an air of jauntiness and uptodation. "Time—The Present," indeed! Every scene, every speech, had its obvious date on it, and in vain did the players try to palm the play off as a thing with life in it. Their effort was as irritating to the audience as it must have been fatiguing to themselves. Everything (I thought) fell flat until the end of the last act, when the audience uprose and protested with loud cheers its ineradicable affection and admiration for Mr. Hare, that artist, and showed by its persistent cries of "Speech! Speech!" how anxious it was for any modern thing—even a managerial speech—which might purge from its mouth the adulterated old-world flavour of the play.

And "School" might have been so enchanting, had Mr. Hare but produced it in the right way, with the costumes appropriate to its period. Surely, it was obvious folly to produce it as a modern play which would appeal dramatically to a modern audience. One does not expect a stuffed bird to sing. If the skeleton of the dodo soared into the air, one would be surprised. And yet this play has been produced as though it had just been written. Surely, with the precedent of "Trelawny" at the

Court, such folly is inexplicable. There need, I think, have been no great stretch of imagination or of daring to foresee that the public which had flocked to sentimentalise over a faked portrait of the early 'sixties would be quite as eager to see a genuine portrait of the late 'sixties. The language of the 'sixties had been caught deftly enough by Mr. Pinero. But here, in "School," we have the very quintessence. "What a singular girl!" soliloquises Lord Beaufoy, in the third act. "As fresh as nature and as artless as moss! So different from the young persons one sees in Paris, and from the splendid tame tiger-lilies one meets in town!" That is quite perfect. Imagine how it would have entranced one, had it been spoken by an actor made up as a young "swell," with glengarry, cheroot, and "Crimean beard"! Spoken, as it was, by an actor who was laboriously dressed up to the 'nineties and was in terror of creating a laugh, it only made one curse the management's ingenuity in ruining a production. To preserve that impossible formula, "Time—The Present," there was a resort to two or three touching little subterfuges. Thus "Tel-el-Kebir" had been substituted for "Balaclava." Of course Balaclava and the appearance of Mr. Fred Kerr are not congruous; but equally incongruous are Tel-el-Kebir and the character of Jack Poyntz. This kind of tinkering is, indeed, worse than useless. If the management was blindly determined to produce the play in a

modern way, Mr. Carton, or some one else who is in sympathy with the Robertsonian spirit, should have been commissioned to revise every line of the original version and bring it up to date. But that would not have been enough. Merely verbal revision would not have brought "School" up to date: reconstruction—fundamental reconstruction—would have been necessary. There is, as you may have heard, such a thing as social evolution. Customs, institutions, the relation of classes, the whole fabric of life—these things do not stagnate during three decades; certainly, they have not stagnated here since 1869. Human nature may be pretty much as it was; but it is ever being expressed through new conventions, before new backgrounds. As a sentimental Tory, I dislike new conventions and new backgrounds. There they are, nevertheless; one cannot ignore them, and it is silly to mix a little of one period with a little of another. To transfer "School" into the late 'nineties, would entail the complete transformation of its background and the excision of its main motive. As touching the background, I need hardly say that Dr. Sutcliffe's Academy for Young Ladies is quite obsolete. The moment the curtain rises on the first act, we are confronted with anachronism—school-girls in modern costume sitting in a wood, whilst a pupil-teacher reads to them the story of Cinderella. Either the girls should be dressed as in '68, or the pupil-teacher should be replaced by

a young woman with a Cambridge Local Certificate, and "Cinderella" by the current issue of "Answers" or "Home Chat." The curtain of Act II. rises on anachronism even more glaring. The pupil-teacher, discovered, is shelling peas. Now, if there is one occupation peculiarly redolent of the 'sixties, it is the shelling of peas. Even in the 'seventies it had almost entirely died out, and I suppose it is now done by machinery. The modern Bella—her name, by the way, is very '68—would have to be discovered with a type-writing machine or a copy of "The Perfect Wagnerite." The pupils singing "seconds," the pupils curtseying to Mrs. Sutcliffe—these little touches of temporal colour would have to be obliterated. Bella and Naomi would not be sent to look for Mrs. Sutcliffe's goloshes, for goloshes are no longer worn; nor would the pair be chased by a mad bull, for the modern bull is invariably sane. Dr. Sutcliffe and Krux, the usher, would be cut out entirely, and Mrs. Sutcliffe, whose every sentiment shows her to be a lady with *paniers* and *pouffes* to her dress, and to be the proud possesser of a "Grecian bend," constant envy of her pupils—would not the whole of her character have to be very thoroughly overhauled? Indeed, the whole atmosphere of the play would have to be changed before it could be enacted in modern vesture with any result but absolute, irritating disaster. Its main motive would, as I have hinted, have to be changed also.

It is, most essentially, a snobbish play. All the drama in it has snobbishness for its foundation. Perpend! A young peer meets a young lady of humble position and unknown parentage. He falls in love with her. She is duly overwhelmed by his condescension, and she accepts him. He gives her a ring, but forbids her to say what it portends. Her employers ask who gave it her, and, hearing that the young peer gave it her, they dismiss her, as a matter of course. Six weeks elapse. Every one believes the worst. Enter the young peer. He announces that the young lady is living with him, and, though he is dressed as a bridegroom, no one ventures for one moment to suppose that he has not merely seduced her. After an interminable scene of mystification, enter the young lady dressed as a bride. The young peer declares that he has married her. But that, according to the canons of the 'sixties, would be an unhappy, a painful, ending to the play. Unhappy endings had not yet become popular, and so Tom Robertson took steps to assure the audience that the young lady was the long-lost grandchild of Beau Farintosh, a gentleman of highest fashion. And thus, when the curtain was rung down, the audience went away perfectly satisfied, admiring the romantic self-sacrifice of the young peer, and rejoicing that his action had not, after all, involved him in a union which would have been too hideous to contemplate. Well! to a modern audience the frank snobbishness of

"School" is a trifle offensive. A modern audience would not mind if the play were presented as a picture of the dark, undemocratic 'sixties—as such, it would be most delightful; but it is quite intolerable as a picture of contemporary life—it is a gross libel. Snobbishness still exists, no doubt, but we try to veil it. A Lord is still a Lord, but we do not call his attention to the fact quite so persistently as we did in the days of Tom Robertson. In our hearts, we adulate him as much as ever, but, thank Heaven! we have the decency to pretend to treat him as one of ourselves. And, just as we do no longer fawn on our betters, so do we not now bully our inferiors. Just as we try to conceal our respect for our betters under cover of an almost brusque manner, so do we, by parade of a too elaborate courtesy, try to make our inferiors feel how utterly we despise them. If there existed now any girls' school with a disagreeable usher and a pupil-teacher of lowly origin, it is quite certain that the former would not send the latter for a clothes-brush and tell her to brush his coat. The situation is impossible and, therefore, not dramatic. The refusal of Bella to brush Krux's coat may have been a highly effective "curtain" in the 'sixties. It is a very weak one in the late 'nineties. If, on the other hand, the play . . . but why should I lay any further stress on the inanity of the Globe production? I trust I have written enough to persuade Mr. Hare to atone ere long by producing "Caste," or some other play

of the Robertson repertory, with due respect for archæology, sentiment and common-sense. If he will do this, I can promise him that he will have not only a good notice in the "Saturday Review," but also a great artistic and commercial success.

"GRIERSON'S WAY"

February 11, 1899.

"WHY was not this experiment made on the whole of that vile body, the public, rather than on that small fraction of the public which is so amenable to the mesmeric beck of Mr. Archer, Mr. Massingham and Miss Robins that it will sacrifice an afternoon or two in the cause of serious drama?" That is a decolloquialised version of the problem I was propounding to myself and others during the entr'actes of "Grierson's Way." I propound it here. Why did not Mr. Harrison and Mr. Maude buy "Grierson's Way," instead of merely lending their theatre for a furtive and limited production of it? That their loan is regarded as a sign in them of the utmost daring, is shown by the perfervid and Heaven-bless-you-kind-gentlemen-may-you-never-want-for-anything effusion of gratitude with which Mr. Archer covered them, preliminarily, in the "World." When Mr. Esmond's "Cupboard Love" was produced at the Court Theatre, nobody seemed to be impressed by Mr. Chudleigh's daring. Yet "Cupboard Love" had absolutely no merit of any kind, and "Grierson's Way" is the best English play of its kind that has been produced in London. How hideous a condemnation of the

public, that the one was taken (by a manager) and the other left (to the New Century Theatre). Hideous —and hasty? The one ran for only six nights, being, apparently, below even the public's level. Might not the other have run for (say) sixty? Might not the dereliction of the one have been taken as augury of some hope for the other? Had the other been but a curious effort in dramaturgy—a bad play written exquisitely by a poet, or thoughtfully by a philosopher, or strenuously by a propagandist—then, of course, I could not have hoped for it more than a success of esteem. But this play of Mr. Esmond's, remarkable in many ways, is primarily remarkable for its stage-craft. Personally, I think that the modern glorification of stage-craft is a thing to be deplored. Stage-craft is not the same thing as dramatic power: one can have either without the other. But the amount of stage-craftiness required in the making of a play which shall be good according to modern canons is quite enormous, and among other lamentable results of this tyranny is the fact that playwriting is now confined to so small a ring of writers, most of whom are personally men of second-rate to tenth-rate ability. We have first-rate writers in whom the sense of drama is paramount—Mr. Hardy and Mr. Gissing among them. Why do not they enrich our stage-literature? Simply because the novel is a wide medium for drama, the theatre a narrow one; and because they do not deign to spend their time

in studying and assimilating the thousand-and-one meticulosities of restriction and imposition which have gradually adhered to the art of writing plays. At present I do not hear on Primrose Hill, or on any other of our mountains, the feet of him who shall redeem our drama by showing the people that these meticulosities are no more essential to true drama, no less injurious to it, than was the Pharisaism of nineteen centuries ago to the Jews' religion. Here I sit, straining my ears patiently, but . . . but, alas! I have digressed. What I meant to say was merely that Mr. Esmond is, in the truest and widest sense, a dramatist, and also that he has expressed himself in "Grierson's Way" without violating any of the modern conventions. He has not slipped off the tight-rope. Not one of the egg-shells has he broken. His play is in four acts, all most neatly constructed; the curtain falls every time on a climax; all the action takes place in one room; there is no character which does not definitely and directly contribute to the plot's progress; and so on, and so on, insomuch that no one could deny that the play is perfectly "well-made." What, then, prevented any manager from producing it? Its gloom, I suppose. The public, as its members are always asserting, does not "go to the theatre to be harrowed." To me such a play as this is far less painfully harrowing than any of those rattling farces or bustling romances which the public loves. I do not like being *actually* harrowed. To be

æsthetically harrowed, however, gives me great pleasure. The trouble with the public is that it has not enough art-sense to be æsthetically harrowed by a modern tragedy—it cannot take the thing impersonally, and is depressed by it actually. A tragedy that is remote from modern conditions, a tragedy cast in another age and in another country, may give it some kind of æsthetic pleasure. From "Hamlet," as being a glimpse of Denmark in the dark ages, it does not shrink. But, conceive what a frost that play would be if it were brought up to date: if Claudius were just a prosperous merchant who had become sole partner in his business and master of a commodious residence at Blackheath through poisoning his brother and marrying his sister-in-law; if Hamlet, his step-son, were a young man who had just taken a first in Greats at Oxford; if Ophelia were the daughter of a dear old vicar in the neighbourhood. Would even Mr. Harrison and Mr. Maude connive at the production of such a play? Should not even I protest against it? And, if I, how much more strongly the public! Yet, when it is merely a matter of "*Scene*, Elsinore. *Time*,—" the public derives no more pity and awe than is quite pleasant from the spectacle of Death bowling over Polonius, Ophelia, Gertrude, Claudius, and Hamlet, with unerring aim, as though they were so many ninepins. If Mr. Esmond had only written, in his stage-directions, "Elsinore" for "London," and "——" for "The Present," com-

mercial success might have been his. In "The Jest" Messrs. Parker and Carson showed us a main situation very similar to the main situation in "Grierson's Way"—a husband advised by a lunatic to commit suicide because he had married a woman who loved another man. "Cesare," like "Grierson," was "the shadow between her and the sunlight," but then, luckily for him, his name was Cesare, and he was Mediævo-Florentine, and Mr. Wyndham knew that the public would not be frightened by him. Except their fatal dilemma, Grierson and Cesare have nothing in common. Poor Grierson could never have cut a dashing figure in chain-armour. He is a sweet, weak creature, whose very unselfishness seems due to the lack of any power to assert himself. After he has done one thing on his own initiative—married the girl he loves, in order to save her from the disgrace of her seduction by another man—all volition ebbs out of him. He simply sits down and lets things take their course, until it is time for him to commit suicide. In fact, he is rather a muff. As presented by Mr. Esmond, he is by no means an impossible or unlikely character; on the contrary, he seems terribly real. But, much as one pities Grierson, I cannot help thinking that Mr. Esmond would have done well to endow him with a little more "kick." If, having married Pamela, Grierson tried to make her love him, if he did not give her the opportunity of reading letters from her seducer, if he forbade the

seducer to call at the house—if, in a word, he once struggled against destiny—his final extinction would have been even more dramatic than it is. It is all very well to talk about "inevitableness": no doubt there is much drama to be got out of the "relentless march of fate," and out of a man's helplessness against fate. But I maintain that such drama is far more poignant when the man struggles and rebels than when he mildly acquiesces. However, I do not wish to find fault with Mr. Esmond—my general gratitude is too great for that. Grierson is, at least, a *real* character, and so is every other character in this play. I am grateful for this play because it shows me real and human characters, behaving in a real and human way, under stress of circumstances that are conceivable. I am grateful, in fact, for a privilege seldom vouchsafed me by any dramatist. When I read the play, and again, when I saw it acted, it gave me a real emotion. The end of Grierson really moved me, and on the future of Pamela I am still speculating. Will she marry Captain Murray, her old lover, or will the revulsion from him, caused by her husband's suicide, be permanent in her? Mr. Esmond—rightly, as I think—does not settle that question. As a dramatist, he is concerned with Grierson's Way, not with the success or failure of that Way, and, as soon as Grierson is dead, the play is, strictly, at an end. Murray comes, however, and rings at the door of Grierson's flat. We hear him ringing

and ringing. Finally, we hear him going away. His partial introduction is no more, really, than the introduction of Fortinbras at the end of "Hamlet" —no more than a symbol that, though the play is over, there is a future. It is merely one of those vague symbols which are the fit conclusion to a work of art.

Mr. Tetheradge played the part of Grierson exactly as it ought to have been played, suggesting at once the feebleness and the fineness of the man's nature. It would be difficult for any actress to make the part of Pamela seem unreal, but no actress could have intensified its reality better than Miss Lena Ashwell. She did not move gracefully on the stage or use her voice beautifully, but she played with intense sincerity and power. And in a realistic play of this kind grace of movement and diction are of less importance than sincerity and power. Actresses may be divided into four classes: those who comport themselves beautifully on the stage and give the impression of real life; those who only comport themselves beautifully; those who only give the impression of real life; and those who do neither of these things. The last of these classes is the largest, and the first, in which only the greatest actresses can be placed, is, of course, the smallest. Mr. Fred Terry, as Captain Murray, had the least good of the parts, but made the most of one fine scene. Mr. Esmond, as the half-mad cripple, realised the author's intention with com-

mendable fidelity. There was also a baby in the play. As soon as it appeared on the stage, the audience distinguished itself by continuous peals of inane laughter. It did not matter that the baby (begotten by Captain Murray) was brought on simply to point the tragedy of Grierson's position. Babies on the stage are supposed to be objects of mirth, and so the audience roared. Remember that this audience was, so to say, a picked audience —one that had come deliberately to see a serious play. If the baby had been shown to an ordinary first-night audience, I tremble to think what would have happened—I suppose the play would have had to proceed entirely in dumb show. Perhaps it is well that the play was not given to the whole public. Oh, the public, the public! It will never be described better than in Mr. Bumble's famous epigram.

COMPARISONS

March 18, 1899.

Except Miss Geneviève Ward, none of the mimes did well in the new piece at the Adelphi. Miss Ward herself had very little to do, and even that little was of slight importance to the play. So far as I can remember—plays like "The Man in the Iron Mask" make slight claim on one's memory——there was no particular reason for the Queen Mother to appear on the stage at all. Appear she did, however, in the person of Miss Ward, and then, for the first and last time in the evening, one saw a performance that did not utterly violate all those canons to which, in romantic melodrama, mimes must conform. Miss Ward conformed magnificently to all those canons. She strode across the stage, bearing herself reginally. She struck the ground with her stick sharply. She threw back her head, and her eyes were blazing. She rolled forth her words with bitter passion. Her every syllable was resonant, and with her every gesture she swept the house. And she won a full, immediate victory for the old tradition, for the grand manner. The moment she appeared on the stage, her presence—and she has indeed a presence!—thrilled us to attention. After our prolonged oppression in a

sultry atmosphere of amateurishness, it was as welcome as a thunderstorm. Though it did not exactly clear the air—as soon as it was over, sultriness set in again—it was, while it lasted, intensely stimulating. It was fine to hear, and its flashes were a wondrous spectacle.

Altogether, a sorry evening for the new school of acting! Do not take me to mean that the new school is inferior to the old. In many ways it is far superior, though it cut so very poor a figure on Saturday night. Weigh the two methods in the scales of modern comedy or modern tragedy, and the new method comes down with a triumphant clash. Weigh them, however, in the scales of romantic melodrama, and that method flies lightly, ingloriously, up. The new method of acting is corollary to the new method of drama, just as was the old method of acting to the old method of drama. It is always (if I may say so without wounding the Actors' Association) the dramatist who makes the mime, and not (as some mimes fancy) *vice versâ*. And as the new drama will wax inevitably, and the old will wane, the importance of the new acting and of the old will wax and wane in relative proportion. As one who likes to be on the winning side, I should be, therefore, the last to pooh-pooh the new acting. It is only when I am forced to see an imitation of the old drama that I champion the old acting. "But," some one may object, "how dare you imply that romantic melo-

drama is an old-fashioned form? Haven't we been deluged with it for months?" We have. The public will always want to be deluged with it. When I call romantic melodrama an old-fashioned form, I mean that it is no longer a form to which any vital English dramatist devotes himself. The best plays that are written now are realistic tragedies, like "Grierson's Way," or realistic comedies, like "The Liars." All the romantic melodramas that are written now are very poor stuff—"The Man in the Iron Mask" is, by the way, very poor stuff indeed—and the best of them is as inferior to "The Lady of Lyons" as are the tame, niggling, gripless little efforts of Mr. Anthony Hope or Mr. Stanley Weyman to the novels of the elder Dumas. When "The Lady of Lyons" was written, romantic melodrama was a form which the good dramatist still loved, which he still took quite seriously. Now it is left to accomplished hacks, who fake it up to the best of their ability. In dramaturgy, as in literature and painting, real highfalutinism is just now a lost art. Bombastes has been suppressed. Ercles' vein is off. Regret this, if you like—I myself often do regret it—but don't deny the patent fact. Art is never stagnant. It is always moving, heavily, irresistibly, now in one direction, now in another. During recent years, it has been moving in the direction of realism—when I say "realism," I use the word in its general and proper sense, not as signifying any

crude presentation of suicide, disease, or incest. Fifty years ago, literary and pictorial genius was all for rainbows, waterfalls, palaces, princesses, zephyrs, lakes, ruined towers by moonlight. These things were shaken and taken by the best artists and by them glorified with the utmost rhetoric. The writer orated over them in words, the painter in pigments. They were called the Good, the Beautiful, and the True, and were the stock-in-trade of every self-respecting artist. In those days, the artist's aim was to shut his eyes to the actual world as tightly as he could, to see nothing as it was, and to create for himself a remote and roseate phantasmagoria. Sometimes this aim had very beautiful results. The pictures painted by Turner, even the romances of Bulwer, had passages of very real, even tremendous, power. Certainly, the neo-romantic movement in England was by no means barren. But it could not last for ever. Reaction came gradually. One after another, the younger artists refused to throw in their lot with the Good, the Beautiful, and the True. They opened their eyes to the world around them. They began, like babies, to "take notice." And what they saw interested them. They vowed that life itself and the little facts of various lives, their own characters and the characters of other men and women, had far more fascination than was to be found in the phantasmagorias of the masters. Whether they were right or wrong, I am not going to discuss.

The important thing is that they held this opinion, and that they acted on it. Timidly at first, they drew near to life, and began to describe what they saw. In painting, literature, dramaturgy, new schools were founded, schools which are still flourishing, and realism was the motto of them all. Realism was the chief motive of the Pre-Raphaelites as essentially as it was, later, the chief motive of the Impressionists. From George Eliot to Meredith and Hardy, all the novelists have been imbued with this one primary aim : to get nearer to actual life, deeper into it. Mr. Hardy professes to have found in it the Bad, the Ugly, and the False ; Mr. Meredith, to have found the other things. But though the discoveries of the two men have been so different, their method has been the same. Both are realists, both constantly inquisitive of life. They have had their ears at the same key-hole, though they have not overheard the same things. And the best of the younger writers, they too are realists. The realistic novel is the only kind of novel that has any life in it now. And, as in painting and in literature, so also in dramaturgy the trend has been, and is, all towards realism. Maeterlinck himself, though, like the Pre-Raphaelites, he wears a romantic halo, is as much a realist as Ibsen : it is the various emotions of men and women, as they are, that he is always seeking to describe. There is significant irony in the fact that Tom Robertson, the first man to introduce realism on the modern English stage,

has long since been swept away by the revolution he created. It was he who first tried to make his puppets life-like, and in doing so, he created, also, that new school of acting which is one theme of my article. He created the Bancrofts. Since that time, the whole method of acting has changed. The old method was useless in the portrayal of modern human beings. For such portrayal, sympathy, intelligence, the power to observe character accurately and to render with delicacy fine shades of emotion, are of far greater importance than are a voice of thunder and an imperial manner of walking about the stage. The new method, quiet and subtle, is the only method by which modern drama can be interpreted. And it has killed the old method. On the metropolitan stage, Miss Ward is now one of the very few exponents of the old method. Nearly all the others have been driven forth into the provinces. There, indeed, the old method is still flourishing. There one finds infinitely better acting in romantic melodrama than one ever finds in London. There, too, Shakespeare's plays are performed much better than in London, for in Shakespeare's plays the poetry and the rhetoric are of far greater importance than the psychology. The metropolitan mimes squeeze out of them the last drop of psychology, and add many more on their own account; but of the splendour of the verse they can give us little or nothing: the plays languish under a load of delicate, irrelevant subtlety.

And if the old method is the best means of interpreting Shakespeare, in whose plays there is always more or less psychology, how much more is it the best interpreter of romantic melodrama, in which there is no psychology at all! I think it a great pity that the author of "The Man in the Iron Mask" did not insist, in his contract with Mr. Norman Forbes, that all the parts should be assigned to old-fashioned mimes. If there were not enough of them—the cast is large—in London, then others should have been brought up from the provinces. For "The Man in the Iron Mask" is just an essay in the thunder-and-lightning *genre*, and in that *genre* one demands from the mimes something more deafening than the homely chirp of the cricket, and more dazzling than the modest radiance of the night-light.

AN ASIDE

April 8, 1899.

I SAW a play last week. It was extremely dull. There was not one moment of drama in it. It was in five long acts. It was written in verse, most of which was spoken in long speeches by the two principal characters. Whenever the curtain fell, it fell not on a dramatic climax, but simply on some especially elaborate peroration. And yet the audience seemed to enjoy itself immensely. The applause was frequent, and full in volume.

I need hardly say that I saw this play in Paris, not in London. In London such a play would not be possible. If it had been produced by some mad and wealthy manager, it would have been inevitably withdrawn after the first night. And yet it is the kind of play which runs, in Paris, for many weeks; the kind of play, even, that Parisians love better than any other. For, like the Athenian and the Elizabethan audiences, a Parisian audience loves listening to the declamation of verse; will sit and listen to it, unyawning, rapt, for three and a half consecutive hours, and will then pronounce the play "bien beau" with absolute sincerity. It does not need any bribe of "sumptuous production." A few shabby scenes, a few shabby supers, are all that the

manager need provide, if he has secured a play written in sonorous Alexandrines, and has engaged actors and actresses who can roll out their speeches, beautifully, in the grand manner. Our public cares not at all for the sound of words, and will not tolerate poetry on the stage unless it gets also gorgeous and solid scenery, gorgeous and innumerable supers. It generally happens that the scenery and the costume for these occasions are hideous and, æsthetically, worse than worthless. But that does not matter. So long as the things look as expensive as the preliminary paragraphists have declared them to be, the public is well satisfied, and will, for their sake, condescend to tolerate a certain measure of poetry. Not a great measure, certainly. The poetry must be short and split; must be subordinated to the action of the piece, and to the expensive scenery and the expensive costumes. In fine, the London public is lacking in that attribute which has been given to the Parisian public: a sense of beauty. I wonder whether this is in any way the result of our environment? I have often thought that Paris, λιπαρὰ πόλις, with the dry and glittering air on its trees and statues, and on the grandeur of its wide, white-grey streets, must indeed always foster the sense of beauty in its citizens. In London, here and there, one can find buildings that are beautiful. But they are rare and devious. Ugliness, formlessness, is the keynote of the whole city. Certain poets and painters have, in

recent years, declared London to be beautiful; insomuch that we have been bullied into a vague belief that, in some mysterious way, it is so. As a matter of fact—there is no use in blinking the fact—it is quite hideous. Painters may have painted it well, and poets written good sonnets about it; but the beauty lies in their work, not in their subject. So far from quickening the sense of beauty in its citizens, London must tend to deaden it. Or am I mixing cause and effect? Is it rather because we, as a nation, lack sense of beauty that London is so ugly, and because the Parisians have sense of beauty that Paris is so beautiful? Perhaps that is the sounder theory. In any case, it is undeniable that the most obvious characteristic of modern art in England—and especially of dramatic art—is its lack of beauty. A few weeks ago, in these columns, I was pointing out that during the past forty or fifty years the movement of all English art has been steadily towards realism, and that in none of our arts is this movement so evident as in our drama. The obvious beauty of poetry and romance is almost uncultivated now by our dramatists. In France, however, it is still cultivated, is still regarded as the best and most important thing. France, alike in drama and in literature, is faithful to its old tradition of beauty. True, it has produced realists, has coquetted with realism. But it has never for one moment taken realism seriously. Balzac, Zola, Maupassant—it is only in England that they are,

as writers, taken seriously. The Frenchman regards realism merely as an amusing short-cut to impropriety, and he takes it accordingly. He will never salute as a great writer any man whose first aim is not literary beauty. In other words, it is the classic tradition which still governs French taste. Beauty of subject, beauty of treatment, are still held to be essential. In England, on the other hand, the critics and the public are quick to crown with laurels any one who, with acute perception and with vigour and sincerity, writes about anything at all. It does not matter how ugly the subject may be, or how unlovely the treatment of it: if the thing be "true" it is unreservedly acclaimed. Had Mr. Kipling been born a Frenchman his talent would have found no recognition at all. Indeed, it is probable that he would never have extricated himself from the necessity of journalism, and would at this moment be known to us only as a particularly virulent Anti-Semite, Chauvinist, and fulminator against "*perfide Albion.*" Luckily he was not born under the French standard of literary taste. He was born an Englishman, and thus his talent has expanded to the utmost and is in no immediate danger of being underrated. No national standard of taste is perfect. We, in England, are inclined nowadays to care too little for beauty in literature, and to think that the lack of it is no great fault; just as, conversely, the French are inclined to see no great merit in any work of art that does not

conform to beauty. Which is the sounder standard —the French or the English? The standard by which a writer like Mr. Kipling would be ruthlessly excluded from the hierarchy of letters, or that by which he is placed promptly at the head of it?

AN OBJECT LESSON

May 6, 1899.

Dinner done and cigarettes alight, I said to the foreigner who was my guest, "No doubt, you are right. London has no obvious air of gaiety. By daylight and candle-light, we enjoy ourselves without seeming to do so. We have not, in fact, what you have well defined as the 'spirit of the carnival.' But, believe me, open-air cafés, which you recommend as a panacea, would not be any good at all. Our climate, and our manners (which are the result of our climate), would make such cafés quite barren and impossible. You belong to a talkative nation. Your people go to the café to talk. Bock, absinthe, syrup, whatever it may be, is the mere little pretext. Englishmen, on the other hand, have no conversation—at least, not when they are sober. When they are drunk, they do, indeed, talk, and do attain even a certain degree of *disinvoltura*. Some become sentimental and retrospective; others, quarrelsome; others, gay. The first kind tends to tears; the second, to blows; the third, to horseplay. But do not imagine that in a café such as you have prescribed for us there would ever be any general air of animation. There could be no general animation till the majority of the people were in their

cups; and even then the question would arise whether an atmosphere of frowns and whispers be not, on the whole, preferable to one of tears, blows and practical jokes. However, I do not suppose one would ever get so far as to find that a burning question. For the English are a sober and sensible race, and the small percentage that is dissolute would not be tolerated in a café built for the greatest pleasure of the greatest number. So, my friend, you may take it from me that such a resort would be not appreciably more cheerful than the National Gallery which you admired so much this afternoon. Nevertheless, do not run away with the impression that we English do not habitually enjoy ourselves. We *do*, though we have no means of showing it. Even those of us who have private worries or anxieties derive a real and constant solace from the knowledge that they are Englishmen. If one of your compatriots broke his leg or lost a large sum of money, he would, for a time, suffer unalloyed misery. But an Englishman, in similar case, would be upheld through his affliction, and kept inwardly cheerful, by the thought of that great Empire which is ours. Believe me, there is not an Englishman to whom that Empire is not a source of continual and personal pleasure."

"The Empire! But yes," said my friend. "I have often heard to speak of it."

"Heard of it?" I cried, laughing at the narrowness which is characteristic of even the most intelli-

gent Frenchmen. "Heard of it? I should rather think you had!"

"By example, yes! And I have great envy of to see it. It ought to be an affair well amusing, well gay."

"Scarcely amusing, perhaps. But very great, very solid, very gratifying."

"Could we not accompany us there this evening?"

I smiled interrogation.

"Is it not that it finds itself in la Place Leicester? Is that then so far from here?"

. . . Presently, we descended at the portal of that great establishment which is the reputed hub of all the wild gaiety in London—that Nirvana where gilded youth and painted beauty meet, to the strains of music and the twinkling of Terpsichore, in a glare of electric light. I had not wanted to come to it for my own sake. But I had thought that a visit might perhaps explain to my friend the point which I had been trying to impress on him: that obvious gaiety is not possible in London. So I had consented to show him the place. We bought two seats. As we passed, on our way to them, into the far-famed Promenade, I asked my friend to walk slowly, and to observe carefully the throng's demeanour. Everything was the same as it had ever been. The same glare, and the same music; the same congestion of silk hats and swallow-tails, pressed against the barrier of the circle, watching

the ballet; the same slow and serried procession of silk hats and swallow-tails, billicocks and racing-coats, moodily revolving along the space between the ballet-gazers and the long row of large-hatted ladies who, bolt upright on the crimson settees against the wall, conversed with one another in undertone; the same old absence, in fact, of any gaiety, of any semblance of gaiety, of any wish or effort to contrive any little hollow semblance of gaiety. I saw that my friend was puzzled, disappointed. Around him were all the common ingredients for revelry—light, glitter, youth, money, beauty, dancing, alcohol; all those things without which revelry is, indeed, quite possible, but with even a small measure of which revelry would seem, to the child of a Latin race, quite inevitable. I was amused by my friend's disillusionment. We loitered, contemplative. There was no need to clinch my previous argument by pointing for him with words the moral of the Promenade. As we descended the staircase to the stalls, "My brave," he said to me simply, "you had reason."

The ballet—"Alaska"—was winding to its conclusion. The battalions of slim and spangled limbs were whirling through their final evolutions, and the orchestra blared to the climax. Cavalazzi, the immense, the inscrutable—for any meaning she ever conveys to me, Cavalazzi is a sphinx indeed—came striding through the coryphées. She threw back her head and pointed to the ground. She

frowned and folded her arms. She smiled, unfolded her arms and pointed with the forefinger of her right hand to the middle-finger of her left hand. She strode significantly away through the coryphées, leaving them and the orchestra to bring things to a satisfactory conclusion. When the curtain fell, two footmen appeared before it with brooms, and swept away stray flakes of the golden rain which had fallen in the ballet. A "celebrated operatic vocalist" being indisposed, the orchestra played a selection. (Surely "extra-turns" might be contrived on these occasions?) M. Delbosq appeared in due time—"comic tumbler and vaulter." Mr. Imro Fox followed him—"comic conjurer." This gentleman, though he spoke with an unique blend of the German and American accents, did not persuade me that conjuring, that gloomiest of the arts, can be brought into any kind of relation to comedy. A man may bring a rabbit out of a hat, and a pigeon out of a canister. A man may make puns, and may pretend, more than once, to trip up as he crosses the stage. But when these two different kinds of activity are combined they really are intolerable. Mr. Imro Fox combined them, and I could not bear him. Came the three Harveys, who walked very gracefully on wires. Their performance pleased me as an unusually finished example of that art which, as was once observed by a thoughtful critic of it, "seeming to defy the laws of gravity, owes its success to the completeness of its

obedience to them." Their performance pleased me, too, as the one thing on the programme that was neither deadly dull in itself nor utterly unsuited to a vast stage and vast auditorium. Came Yvette Guilbert. She is one of the " turns " which are of no use in the Empire. Her art is an art of little niceties and nuances, of little half-tones and fine shades, and in singing at the Empire she is about as effective as the writer of the " Genius of Place " would be in addressing a mass meeting in Hyde Park. Of course, the audience applauds her—the educated part of it, lest it be thought not to understand her ; the uneducated part of it, because she receives a fabulous sum for her every performance. So I suppose the management is wise to engage her. As soon as she had sung her last song, the orchestra played another long selection. Then came the most appallingly tedious thing I have ever seen in a place of entertainment. How long it lasted, I do not know : we left before it was over, before there was any symptom that it soon would be over. It may not have been for more than a quarter of an hour—it seemed an eternity—that we watched four young American men riding round the stage on bicycles and trying to project with their front-wheels a small ball into one or other of two small goals. " Bicycle Polo " was the name given to this cheerful pastime. When I go to a music-hall, I do not pay my money to see four young men doing what they might, on a winter's day, in the open air,

possibly do with some enjoyment. Nor can I believe that any one is so inane as to enjoy seeing four young men do this thing in the Empire. I said as much, while I conducted my friend up the staircase. "Who knows?" he laughed. "It seems to be a droll of city, Londres."

As we threaded our way out, the Promenade was still glittering with its habitual gloom. I noticed in the distance two young men who seemed even more gloomy than the rest; my brain, I suppose, was a trifle dulled by the whole evening, for it was not until I came quite close to them that I recognised my friend and myself in a mirror. As we went out, mutes were still pouring in. Souls on the way to purgatory would have looked more cheerful. The only smile I saw was on the face of a drunken man whose entry was being barred by a tall commissionaire. I drew my friend's attention to the smile.

As we drove away, I conjectured that even if the man had been sober his smile would have disqualified him for admittance. But then, as my friend (apt pupil) reminded me, if he had been sober he would not have been smiling.

HAMLET, PRINCESS OF DENMARK

June 17, 1899.

I CANNOT, on my heart, take Sarah's Hamlet seriously. I cannot even imagine any one capable of more than a hollow pretence at taking it seriously. However, the truly great are apt, in matters concerning themselves, to lose that sense of fitness which is usually called sense of humour, and I did not notice that Sarah was once hindered in her performance by any irresistible desire to burst out laughing. Her solemnity was politely fostered by the Adelphi audience. From first to last no one smiled. If any one had so far relaxed himself as to smile, he would have been bound to laugh. One laugh in that dangerous atmosphere, and the whole structure of polite solemnity would have toppled down, burying beneath its ruins the national reputation for good manners. I, therefore, like every one else, kept an iron control upon the corners of my lips. It was not until I was half-way home and well out of earshot of the Adelphi, that I unsealed the accumulations of my merriment.

I had controlled myself merely in deference to Sarah herself, not because I regarded the French prose-version of "Hamlet" as an important tribute

to Shakespeare's genius. I take that version to have been intended as a tribute to an actress' genius, rather than a poet's. Frenchmen who know enough of our language to enable them to translate Shakespeare know very well that to translate him at all is a grave disservice. Neither into French poetry nor into French prose can his poetry be translated; and, since every element in his work was the direct, inalienable result of his poetry, it follows that any French translation is ruinous. I do not say that this particular translation is unskilful; on the contrary, it seemed to me very skilful indeed. The authors seemed to have got the nearest equivalents that could be got. But the nearest equivalents were always unsatisfactory and often excruciating. "Paix, paix, âme troublée!" for "Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!" is a fair sample of what I mean. Save that it reminds one—an accident which the authors could not foresee—of "Loo, Loo, I love you!" there is no fault to be found with this rendering. It is, I think, as good as possible. But it carries in it no faintest echo nor most shadowy reflection of the original magic. It is thin, dry, cold—in a word, excruciating. The fact is that the French language, limpid and exquisite though it is, affords no scope for phrases which, like this phrase of Shakespeare's, are charged with a dim significance beyond their meaning and with reverberations beyond their sound. The French language, like the French genius, can give no hint of things

beyond those which it definitely expresses. For expression, it is a far finer instrument than our language; but it is not, in the sense that our language is, suggestive. It lacks mystery. It casts none of those purple shadows which do follow and move with the moving phrases of our great poets. In order to be really suggestive, a French poet must, like Mallarmé, deliberately refrain from expressing anything at all. An English poet, on the other hand, may be at once expressive and suggestive. That is a great advantage. It is an advantage which none of our poets has used so superbly as Shakespeare. None of our poets has ever given to his phrases shadows so wonderful as the shadows Shakespeare gave to his. In none of Shakespeare's plays, I think, are these shadows so many and marvellous as in "Hamlet;" and the quality of its theme is such that the shadows are more real to us, and reveal more to us, than the phrases casting them. Cut away those shadows, and you cut away that which makes the play immortal—nay! even that which makes it intelligible. One by one, they were cut away by the two talented Parisians who translated "Hamlet" for Sarah. Reluctantly, no doubt. But I am dealing with the translation as I find it, and (despite my colleagues) I must refuse to regard it as a tribute to Shakespeare. The only tribute a French translator can pay Shakespeare is not to translate him—even to please Sarah.

In England, as I suggested some time ago, "Hamlet" has long ceased to be treated as a play. It has become simply a hoop through which every very eminent actor must, sooner or later, jump. The eminent actor may not have any natural impulse to jump through it, but that does not matter. However unsuited to the part he be in temperament or physique, his position necessitates that he play it. I deplore this custom. I consider that it cheapens both Shakespeare's poetry and the art of acting. However, it is a firmly-established custom, and I must leave it to work itself out. But I do, while there is yet time, earnestly hope that Sarah's example in playing Hamlet will not create a precedent among women. True, Mrs. Bandman Palmer has already set the example, and it has not been followed; but Mrs. Bandman Palmer's influence is not so deep and wide as Sarah's, and I have horrible misgivings. No doubt, Hamlet, in the complexity of his nature, had traces of femininity. Gentleness and a lack of executive ability are feminine qualities, and they were both strong in Hamlet. This, I take it, would be Sarah's own excuse for having essayed the part. She would not, of course, attempt to play Othello—at least, I risk the assumption that she would not, dangerous though it is to assume what she might *not* do—any more than her distinguished fellow-countryman, Mounet Sully, would attempt to play Desdemona. But, in point of fact, she is just as well qualified to

play Othello as she is to play Hamlet. Hamlet is none the less a man because he is not consistently manly, just as Lady Macbeth is none the less a woman for being a trifle unsexed. Mounet Sully could be no more acceptable as Lady Macbeth than as Desdemona. I hope he is too sensible a person ever to undertake the part. He would be absurd in it, though (this is my point) not one whit more absurd than Sarah is as Hamlet. Sarah ought not to have supposed that Hamlet's weakness set him in any possible relation to her own feminine mind and body. Her friends ought to have restrained her. The native critics ought not to have encouraged her. The custom-house officials at Charing Cross ought to have confiscated her sable doublet and hose. I, lover of her incomparable art, am even more distressed than amused when I think of her aberration at the Adelphi. Had she for one moment betrayed any faintest sense of Hamlet's character, the reminiscence were less painful. Alas! she betrayed nothing but herself, and revealed nothing but the unreasoning vanity which had impelled her to so preposterous an undertaking. For once, even her voice was not beautiful. For once . . . but why should I insist? The best that can be said for her performance is that she acted (as she always does) with that dignity of demeanour which is the result of perfect self-possession. Her perfect self-possession was one of the most delicious elements in the evening's comedy, but one could not help

being genuinely impressed by her dignity. One felt that Hamlet, as portrayed by her, was, albeit neither melancholy nor a dreamer, at least a person of consequence and unmistakably "thoro'bred." Yes! the only compliment one can conscientiously pay her is that her Hamlet was, from first to last, *très grande dame.*

"G. B. S." AT KENNINGTON

October 7, 1899.

For a dramatist who deliberately sits down to write something of a kind which he despises, one would predict failure. For a dramatist who, after two acts, sickens of his task and spends the last act in an endeavour to restore his self-respect by making the other two acts ridiculous, one would predict absolute disaster. Yet "The Devil's Disciple" is not merely a work of extremely fine quality, but a great popular success to boot. I know not which fact surprises me more—the fact that Mr. Bernard Shaw has done a romantic melodrama better than it is done by gentlemen with romantic hearts and melodramatic heads, or the fact that the public seemed quite delighted when the play suddenly tumbled into wild frivolity. For my own part, I had been simmering with laughter throughout the first two acts, but the good people of Kennington, not knowing the soul and the creed of Mr. Shaw, had been taking his play very seriously. I, in their place, should have done the same, for, I repeat, the play is most excellent. But its very excellence was for me the point of the jest. In a bad melodrama by Mr. Shaw there would have been no incongruity. But that he should write a really good

one, in spite of himself—that was irresistible! And so I welcomed the farcical last act, not because it amused me more than the other acts, but as an opportunity for unburdening myself of all the laughter which I had been suppressing in deference to a rapt audience. Also, it was a relief to find that Mr. Shaw had not imposed too lengthy a strain upon himself, but had broken away just when it was becoming intolerable, none the worse for his penance.

"*Si ipsum audissetis!*" What scorn would Mr. Shaw have not poured down these columns on such a play? How he would have riddled the hero, the sympathetic scapegrace (called, of course, "Dick") who, for all his wickedness, cannot bear to see a woman cry, and keeps a warm corner in his heart for the old horse Jim and the old servant Roger, and wishes to be hanged by the English in the place of another man, and tries to throttle the major for calling a lady a woman! What scathing analysis Mr. Shaw would have made of this fellow's character, declaring that he, "G. B. S.," refused to see anything noble in a man who, having lived the life of a wastrel and a blackguard, proposed to commit suicide by imposing on the credulity of a court-martial! Far be it from me to attempt what Mr. Shaw would have done with conviction. Indeed, I confess that "Dick" seemed a very splendid fellow to me, and I rejoice to think that, though he had been so cruelly misunderstood and had lived "with

worthless men, aye! and with worthless women," he had kept his powers of self-sacrifice intact. Yes! "Dick" thrilled me. At least, he would have done so if any one but Mr. Shaw had created him. As it was, I was intolerably tickled by the irony with which Fate had contrived that the first really human and convincing character drawn by Mr. Shaw should be a character which Mr. Shaw had drawn quite cynically and with the express intention that it should be absolutely unlike anything in real life. When, as in his serious plays of modern life, Mr. Shaw depicts life as he conceives it to be, and men and women as he knows them, the result is not (for me, at least) satisfactory. He imagines emotion to be an unfortunate and not inevitable nuisance, and reason to be the pivot on which the world should go round. His heroes and heroines are, therefore, absolutely rational machines, unclogged by such accessories as flesh and blood. It would be hard to imagine anything less like human beings than they are. To Mr. Shaw himself they seem quite real, no doubt. He would probably admit that they are a little in advance of the age, belonging to the twentieth rather than to the nineteenth century. As a matter of fact, there is no reason to suppose that men and women become more rational with the advance of civilisation; still less, that they will ever approximate to Vivie Warren or Leonard Charteris. And, incidentally, the fact that Mr. Shaw quite honestly believes and hopes that

they will, suggests that Mr. Shaw himself is born after rather than before his time. His touching faith in the efficacy of reason dates him right back into the eighteenth century. There, had he lived in it, he would have found many supporters—not leaders, of course, but many staunch supporters. As it is, Mr. Shaw stands alone, apart from the tendencies of this bustling age, a trifle *rococo*. I would not he were otherwise. I would not play pedagogue to him, as does Mr. Archer, trying to persuade him to be this, and to leave off being that, and to beware of becoming the other. On the contrary, I hope Mr. Shaw will always be just what he is—as delightful in the defects of his qualities as in the qualities themselves. Nor have I any doubt that my hope will be gratified. You may mould a child, but not, to any appreciable extent, a grown-up man. Mr. Archer forgets that. He imagines that there is yet time for what he takes to be Mr. Shaw's salvation. But let him cease to trouble. Mr. Shaw's salvation, like that of every one else, is in being himself. For the space of two acts, Mr. Shaw has pretended—for his own amusement and emolument, not to please Mr. Archer—to be not himself. The result is that those two acts are fine and moving drama. But no number of fine and moving dramas to come would compensate me for the permanent obliteration of "G. B. S." If Mr. Shaw had written his last act in key with the other two, his play would have been a better work

of art, but how much less delightful! The success of "The Devil's Disciple" may tempt Mr. Shaw to write other melodramas, and I trust that he will never fail to intrude himself in the last act. That he will always be welcome is proved by the attitude of Kennington. I offer Mr. Shaw my congratulations on the amazing cleverness with which he has handled the melodramatic form, and on having the loud laugh over the thirty or forty London managers who have allowed his play to go a-begging. I trust that when, in the fulness of time, I leave off being a dramatic critic and become a dramatist, my successor in these columns may have reason to be half as jealous of me as am I of "G. B. S."

The play was admirably performed. Mr. Carson, as "Dick," kept the ball rolling at top speed. His humour and his full-blooded method are peculiarly well suited to the part. Interesting as he always is, I do not think I have ever seen him act better or with more obvious enjoyment. Even Mr. Shaw, had he been present at the performance, would have been convinced by "Dick." All the other parts seemed to me to be well filled, especially that of General Burgoyne, a part so exquisite in itself that the veriest duffer could not have seemed bad in it. Mr. Luigi Lablache played it deliciously. But I am impatient for the publication of the play, in order that I may see how Mr. Shaw himself, in accordance with his custom, analyses the General's character in his stage-directions. I hazard, as a

conjecture: "It being his trade to kill off such of his fellow-creatures as do not see their way to being fleeced by his employers, he goes about the job with every desire to speedily bring it to a satisfactory conclusion, but has no enthusiasm, and, if he had, would be careful not to communicate it to his men, knowing well that enthusiasm has been the cause of ninety per cent. of his country's defeats. Finding himself outgeneralled, he accepts the situation with perfect goodhumor, only regretting that the American climate and the dulness of the American generals prevent him from showing his contempt for his country by going over to the enemy. In fact, a realist, whose only illusion is that he is a very agreeable fellow. This (by any civilised standard) he is not; being, indeed, an aggravated type of English gentleman, whose previous professional success alone prevents him from being cordially disliked by the community which has prostituted him to its own ends, and which his failure as a butcher serves thoroughly well right. Withal" . . . but

> "O most presumptuous! lay aside the pipe
> Of that sweet elder shepherd."

WILLIAM ARCHER AND A. B. WALKLEY

November 18, 1899.

In "The Friends of the Rectory," that delicious example of medio-Victorian romance, you will find these words: "The two daughters of the Reverend James Thornton were both remarkable girls, differing widely in all things except the affection each had for the other. Miss Alice, the elder, was of a serious disposition, smiling seldom, thinking much, and a detester of gossip. Strangers thought her cold, not suspecting that beneath the surface beat a generous and kindly heart. Miss Emily, the younger, was noted for vivacity. In company she was never at a loss, but seemed to delight in laughing and poking fun at everything. . . . The neighbours thought her 'giddy.'" One is accustomed to couple Mr. William Archer and Mr. A. B. Walkley, inasmuch as they were the pioneers of "live" dramatic criticism in our generation. Just now, these two books,* published at the same moment and from the same source, seem to put them for me in still closer juxtaposition. Driven

* "Study and Stage," by William Archer (Grant Richards). "Frames of Mind," by A. B. Walkley (Grant Richards).

to compare them, I find myself sharply confronted with the shades of the Misses Thornton.

Miss Emily, as you may remember, had "many admirers," who were more than a trifle "afraid" of Miss Alice; and I confess that I am one of those who prefer Mr. Walkley's manner to Mr. Archer's. Much as I admire W. A., I do not count myself an "admirer" of him, as of A. B. W. I respect him, revere him, am vastly impressed by him, always. In him I find my ideal of a critic, but—is it not always a little disconcerting, even depressing, to find one's ideal? Besides, I do not much care about good criticism. I like better the opinions of strong, narrow, creative personalities. There is more joy in my breast over one oath roared by Mr. Henley than over the ninety-and-nine just opinions which a man like Mr. Archer can produce at a moment's notice. Mr. George Moore, prancing uncinctured through a forest of mistakes, bruising himself and tumbling head over heels, groping and groaning his way further into darkness, emerges sooner or later, if only for an instant, into some brighter patch of sunlight than is to be found in the cool Academe where sits Mr. Archer, serene, amenable, scrupulously draped. Perhaps it is not quite fair to suggest that Mr. Archer is academic. He is by no means cold, or crabbed, or unapproachable. Indeed, he is a creature of warm and complete sympathies. He radiates readily in any direction. That is why he seems to me an ideally

good critic. But, if a man is always radiating at every point, it follows that no ray can go very far. It is because men like Mr. Henley and Mr. Moore are so narrow, and therefore, almost invariably, so wrong, that they are, now and again, so brilliantly right—and, always, so interesting. If Mr. Archer were less quick to "spot," and to be grateful for, the soul of goodness in things artistically evil, he would be a less good critic, but he would be more entertaining and, here or there, more illuminative. I prefer him as he was in the days of the Ibsen crusade, and I am delighted when he shows some faint trace of his early prejudice. Perhaps with a view to showing that he *can* go wrong if he likes, he calls "Mrs. Warren's Profession" a "masterpiece." But I prefer to think that this is a genuine opinion, the result of an old notion that unpleasant material makes a good play. And, I prefer to think him sincere in advising Mrs. Craigie and Mr. Anthony Hope to "tackle" serious themes. Such advice is obviously foolish. But ah, what a relief it is to find Mr. Archer astray! The feet of Gamaliel caught tripping! It seems to bring one into touch with him.

With Mr. Walkley I am always in touch. Not that he is one of those strong, narrow spirits which I love to watch in criticism! On the contrary, he is almost as broadminded as Mr. Archer. He is neither hater nor lover, but just a level-headed, tolerant student of things. In a way, he appeals

to me less than Mr. Archer. For his is the scientific method, and I like art-criticism to be æsthetic. He is never quite able to forget that he once took a first "in Scientiis Mathematicis et Physicis," and he has cultivated his mind at the expense of those emotions which, in matters of art, are of infinitely greater importance. He does not, like Mr. Archer, love the theatre; indeed he is inclined to despise it. But fate has thrown him in the way of it, and he finds much in it to consider and to discuss. His attitude is not inspiring. Yet he makes it delightful for me. This, by simple means: he is always amusing. He seems "to delight in laughing and poking fun at everything." Humour always pervades the soundest of his theories, making fantasy of common-sense, and softening the dry light with rosy shades. And it is by reason of his humour that his judgments in dramatic criticism carry little weight for the public. Like Miss Emily, he is thought "giddy." In Paris, he would be taken very seriously indeed, for there, as we know, absence of humour is not considered essential to sound work. Mr. Archer's style is not dull, but, again, it is not bright. Consequently, he has attained to a solid "position," and his judgments carry tremendous weight—at least, among all those who do not go to the play.

Whatever the comparative merits of Mr. Archer and Mr. Walkley, there is no doubt at all that Mr. Walkley's is the nicer book. Both books consist

of reprints from various papers—current criticisms of literature, drama and so forth. Mr. Archer's criticisms suffer, in a book, from the excellence of them as reviews for newspapers. His detailed consideration of books now forgotten and plays now withdrawn are very admirable, and will have, no doubt, great documentary interest in the future, but for the moment they seem almost superfluous. By Mr. Walkley subject-matter is less conscientiously treated, and thus his writings "wear" much better. It is not so much his aim to explain to his readers the merits and demerits of this or that work as to construct a theory or point a moral. He begins with a phrase, works round his subject, comes back to the phrase, and makes his bow. He is anxious to reveal himself—in other words to show how clever he is, and how amusing. In fact, he is more of an essayist than a critic, though his criticism is always sound and adequate, except when he is dealing with vast, elemental subjects, such as Balzac. These seem to annoy him. So much the more fun! Mr. Walkley's only irritating fault is his too great allusiveness. He lets Boswell, Aristotle, Sam Weller, Marcus Aurelius and other more recondite philosophers crop up just a little too often. I do not object to Mr. Walkley's erudition. A man cannot read too much. But he can remember too much of his reading. After all, everything has been said a great many times. No man can say a new thing, but he can always say it in a new

(that is, in his own) way. And he cannot say it in his own way if he remembers exactly how a dozen other people have said it before him: he takes the mould handiest to him instead of making one of his own. Thus is literature impoverished. However, there are occasions when inverted commas have a peculiar value, giving point or weight to the context, and Mr. Walkley often strikes pretty effects from his bookishness. He quotes from Michelet a purple patch about women: "'It is with her as it is with the sky in relation to the earth: it is below and above and all round. In her we had our birth. Through her we live. We are enveloped by her; she is the atmosphere, our heart's blood.' 'Gents,' says the bagman in 'Pickwick,' 'I give you woman.' Michelet 'gives us woman' with a vengeance," &c. &c. It is for such things as these that I delight in Mr. Walkley.

Well! I am glad that two so gifted creatures as W. A. and A. B. W. are writing dramatic criticism. I wish very much that the general mass of dramatic criticism showed signs of being improved by their example. Mr. Walkley seems to contend that signed articles are a kind of panacea. But there is one insuperable obstacle to the general use of signed articles in dramatic criticism: most of the critics, I am convinced, cannot sign their names. When I read their articles, I have a suspicion, amounting to a conviction, that reading and writing were not included in their upbringing,

and that their articles are simply dictated to the compositor. It follows that, in most cases, the only authentic signature would be a simple " ×." But that would be little better than anonymity. Besides, though well enough on a ballot-paper, it might be bad for the dignity of the Press.

A VANISHED HAND

December 9, 1899.

If I am not very careful, I shall soon have that deadliest of all assets, a theatrical library. Week in, week out, they come drifting to me from the office of this Review these dreadful, innumerable volumes about mimes dead and forgotten, plays and playwrights dead and forgotten, theatres pulled down and forgotten. Why are these volumes written? Why should any one presume to remember things which are, and ought to be, forgotten by every one else? Why these desperate raids on oblivion? Who wants to know that "the mantle of Macready, which fell all too soon from his sturdy shoulders, was modestly assumed by his brave and faithful lieutenant, Samuel Phelps, one of the great actors of the century whose noble work at Sadler's Wells can never be forgotten"? The fact is that the noble work of the nineteenth century (or does Mr. Scott * mean Samuel Phelps' noble work?) at Sadler's Wells *has* been forgotten, clean forgotten, except by those persons who are old enough to have frequented Sadler's Wells during its management by the nineteenth century (or Samuel Phelps).

* "The Drama of Yesterday and To-day." Clement Scott. 2 vols. London: Macmillan. 1899. 36*s*. net.

For those who saw Samuel Phelps on the stage, such reminiscence may be interesting enough. If Samuel Phelps had possessed in his theatre a combination of phonograph and biograph to enable us to appreciate his abilities as clearly as those of any actor who is disporting himself to-night, then, no doubt, he might mean something to us. Perhaps there will soon be some such invention, and then our grandchildren will not yawn when they listen to our reminiscences of early-twentieth-century mimes. Failing such an invention, we shall, I am afraid, have either to keep our reminiscences to ourselves or to be accounted tedious. So long as the mime's performances are inaudible and invisible after his retirement or decease, so long must he, as artist, forego the claim to anything like immortality. Reminiscences of Thackeray or Browning, Millais or Rossetti, are interesting to us; for great writers and painters are known to us through imperishable work. Criticism of them does not seem to us belated; for we can ourselves still criticise them. But Phelps, Macready, Webster, Buckstone—at them, gently but firmly, we draw the line. Gently but firmly, we protest against any effort to drive in the thin end of immortality's wedge. We understand and respect the motive of such efforts, we suspect that we ourselves shall hereafter be guilty of similar efforts; but that does not make us shrink from the painful duty of discouraging them.

In reading Mr. Scott's book, then, I have carefully

skipped those parts of it which deal with "the drama of yesterday." About "the drama of to-day," however, Mr. Scott is very well worth reading. He is generally in the wrong (as must be any man who regards Tom Robertson as a terminus), but he is never dully in the wrong. If a man is dull, rightness in him does not conciliate me. If he is not dull, wrongness in him is for me no drawback. Mr. Scott has a personality, and therefore I delight in him. It is not, perhaps, a very fine personality, and it is, in many respects, a very absurd personality; but the fact remains that it *is* a definite, consistent personality; and, as such, it always claims some of my attention. Mr. Scott has had, moreover, a strangely chequered life. Hot water has been, and still is, his natural element. His life has been a dissolving view of scrimmages, and it is amusing to note how naïvely unconscious he is that the cause of his troubles lies merely in himself. Again and again, he suggests that dramatic criticism is the most exciting and dangerous career open to a young man. He speaks, ruefully, of "that fatal charger, dramatic criticism." He seems to think that an honest dramatic critic will always, of necessity, be embroiled with the objects of his criticism, and that disingenuousness is the only path to be trodden in peace. I need hardly point out that there is not, really, anything at all dangerous in the practice of honest dramatic criticism. Everything depends on the "tone" of your criticism, and on whether you

make bosom-friends among the people whom you may be called on to criticise. Now, Mr. Scott has always been much more interested in the art of acting than in the art of dramaturgy; and his temperament, and the circumstances under which he has written, have always combined to make his "tone" one of violent ecstasy—ecstasy of blame, ecstasy of praise. Mimes, as I have often pointed out, are necessarily more sensitive to praise or blame than are other artists. It is probable, therefore, that they would have been very often very angry with Mr. Scott even if they had never seen him outside a theatre. But here, again, comes in the question of temperament. Mr. Scott's temperament is such that he cannot admire a mime without yearning to grip him or her by the hand. "I told Fred Charles, who had acted with Fechter, and was now at the St. James's Theatre with Irving, that there were few young actors I was more desirous of meeting." And so Fred Charles arrived at Mr. Scott's room in the War Office, bringing young Irving in tow. The incident is typical. All through his life, Mr. Scott has lived in histrionic society. If he had cared nothing about acting, or if, caring, he had been able to express blame gently and temperately, there need have been no exciting consequences. But Mr. Scott has always cared more about acting than about anything else in the world, and, though a good performance has always filled him with a desire to grip the performer's hand, he has never

felt restrained from lashing out at what seemed to him a bad performance by the fact of a previous handgrip. I do not pretend that so emotional a creature as Mr. Scott has never had his judgment warped by personal friendship (and personal enmity), but I incline to the belief that all the opinions he has expressed have been opinions in which at the moment of expression he did honestly believe. He has had his favourites, and his detestations. But he has always believed in the soundness of his superlatives in favour of his favourites, and of his superlatives in detraction of his detestations. And there have always come moments when he has turned and rent his favourites. What wonder that "bad blood" has been the result? What wonder that even those who were not favourites resented being wildly rent by one whom they knew personally, whom they often sat next to at supper? Ecstasy of praise is slightly discounted by personal acquaintance; but ecstasy of blame is very much aggravated by it. Mr. Scott wrote for a morning paper, and had never time for qualification. The critic of a morning paper must either confine himself to safe *clichés* or run riot in superlatives. Mr. Scott never confined himself to *clichés*, for he had theories about acting. Also, he had the lamentable distinction of being the most rapid writer on the press. He could write, in half an hour, more words than any other man—very long words, too, many of them. Thus, though he had not time enough for

reflection, he had time enough to "rub it in." And if the embrocation happened to be a bitter one—well, then, no wonder he got himself disliked!

Personally (not being an actor), I regret Mr. Scott's voluntary exile in America. I console myself with the assurance that soon he will be again in our midst. The Americans do things on a far larger scale than we. If Mr. Scott could not stand our buckets of hot water, will he stand the scalding reservoirs in New York? No! I expect that he will soon be here, more deeply than ever convinced that honest dramatic criticism means martyrdom, and that his colleagues escape the stake only because they are not honest.

PUNITIVE PANTOMIME

December 30, 1899.

"The Snow Man" is not a pantomime to which all children, indiscriminately, should be taken by their parents. But all naughty children should be taken to it at once. It is, I know, a stern measure that I am advocating; one from which many parents will shrink, partly in fear of the S. P. C. C., partly from an incapacity to see why the sins of the children should be visited on themselves. Nevertheless, I advocate it. The sentimental way of treating children has been tried, and it has failed. Our piteous appeal to their better natures has been intercepted by their worse. It is well known that naughtiness is alarmingly on the increase. Parents must make a stand. Let them make their stand now, in the Lyceum Theatre. Let all children who persistently tell fibs, tear their clothes, run away from home, stamp their feet, refuse to say their prayers, steal jam, fidget, make faces, blot their copy-books and slide down the banisters, be taken, summarily, to see "The Snow Man." Let them arrive for the rise of the curtain, and be kept there for its fall. Then let them be given fair warning that unless they reform they will be taken to see it again. So will naughtiness be stamped out.

But what irony! This sovereign remedy is itself a part of that system which has fostered the disease. Doubtless, in producing "The Snow Man," Mr. Comyns Carr imagined that he was offering to children something which they really would love —something to "spoil" them, and so make them the more beautiful and delightful. The modern system of child-culture, to which Mr. Carr thus conforms, is the system of treating children as decoration. It was inaugurated by Miss Kate Greenaway, developed by the late Mr. Stevenson, spun to a chaste perfection by Mrs. Meynell. Its basis is a feeling that childhood is not (as the world has hitherto supposed) a mere prelude to maturity, but the perfect flower of human existence. Our aim, therefore, should be, not to treat children in such a way as may tend to make them acquit themselves well in after-years, but to conserve in them, passionately, all their wild, little, pretty, untutored impulses. Children are here for our delight, and if we interfere with them we shall be robbing ourselves of our delight. How can we most surely keep them as they are? By making them happy. How make them happiest? By showing them, at all times and in all places, how much we admire them. Here we have the source of all the modern books for children. Instead of cautionary tales, illustrated by grim wood-cuts, we give children pretty little pictures of themselves walking down lanes in prettily-coloured and quaintly-fashioned

clothes; and, very gently, we read aloud to them pretty little verses written by grown-up persons who try to remember and reproduce what was done in the green leaf; then we kiss them, and use every means to dissuade them from leaving us on the plea that it is bed-time. We do not perceive that children, though they are quick to take advantage of our devotion and to use it for their own ends, are intensely bored by us, and that our efforts to pose them as decoration evoke from them none of the gratitude we have a right to expect. We do not perceive that the kind of pantomime inaugurated by Mr. Oscar Barrett, so delightful to us, bores them to extinction. Such pantomimes are praised by the critics, as being "delightful for the little ones," "endless fun for the tots," and so forth. But if the editors, who mostly engage for the criticism of plays men whose opinions coincide as nearly as possible with those of the public, were consistent enough to engage children for the criticism of pantomimes, the result would be that the kind of pantomimes supposed to appeal especially to children would be so unanimously damned by the Press as to necessitate their instant withdrawal. Children have no more wish for "refinement" in pantomimes than in any other things. They do not want graceful dancing or pretty songs. Above all, they do not want idealised versions of themselves. Stories about children, enacted by children, and illustrated by ballets of

children, drive grown-up persons into paroxysms of delight, but they induce gloom into any one under the age of (say) fifteen. What children want—no blame to them—is a show with plenty of monsters, demons, noise and buffoonery. These things are to be found at Drury Lane; but there, alas! unpleasantly overlaid with didactic processions, allegorical ballets and all the rest of it. The only pantomimes really suitable to children are to be found in the suburbs and the provinces. The metropolitan caterers (except Mr. Collins, who was caught very young by Sir Augustus Harris) all seem to have fallen under the spell first cast by Miss Greenaway. This is very delightful for us who are grown-up. But it would not be so if "The Snow Man" were a fair specimen of its kind. A more spectral entertainment one can hardly imagine. It is all the more spectral by reason that many of the big and little mimes engaged in it show glimpses of considerable talent: one is appalled by the utter waste made of them. It is all the more spectral by reason of the very pretty scenery and dresses: one wonders why should so much money and good taste not have been kept to embellish something a little worthy of them. Again, "Who," one asks, "is Mr. Arthur Sturgess? Why was he asked to write the book of the play?" Mr. Carr's answers to these questions would be, I suppose, (1) "A Pantomime Librettist." (2) "Because he is a Pantomime Librettist." Well!

I can understand that experience goes for something. One naturally expects that an experienced workman will be able to construct a story for the stage more or less clearly and dramatically. But that is just what Mr. Sturgess fails to do. I defy the most inexperienced duffer to produce a more opaque rigmarole than "The Snow Man," with its endless superfluities, and repetitions, and involutions, and blanks. But even if Mr. Sturgess had justified the confidence felt in his practical capabilities? Surely, in a writer of "refined" pantomime, one demands some measure of poetic feeling, metric talent, humour, fancy, and so on. Thus, in any case, a collaborator would have been necessary. And I fancy that the collaborator would have pointed out to Mr. Sturgess that the Snow Man was bound to be dreary on the stage, and would have offered to invent a superior substitute within half an hour. The idea of an animated Snow Man, who, with the best intentions, casts a chill upon all around him and freezes the heart of every one he touches, is not a bad symbolical idea for treatment in a book. But on the stage, where you see the actual process—and Mr. Sturgess lets you see it again and again—the Snow Man is quite intolerable. The auditorium seemed to be growing colder and colder. Our teeth chattered. We struggled into our great-coats, and sat with upturned collars. Realism had been going too far. Mr. James Welch played the part of Snow Man. I suspect he was as

much depressed by it as were the rest of us. I had, however, no means of being sure; for he was hidden from head to foot in an impenetrable costume of sheep-skin, and had as little chance of displaying any kind of emotion as a sultana bound for the Bosphorus.

Enough! If I have awakened parents to the chance they have in "The Snow Man" of undoing the evil which recent years of sentimentality have created, then do I forgive Mr. Sturgess the dreadful entertainment. Let every naughty child, forthwith, be taken to the Lyceum. One visit will be enough, surely. But there are matinées and evening performances. The very desperate offender might be taken twice in one day (thick bread-and-butter to be consumed, in the brief interval, at the nearest Aërated Bread Shop).

FIRST NIGHTS

January 6, 1900.

One of the questions with which a fussy conscience loves to pose me is whether I ought not to abjure first nights. I am always driven to admit that I ought to. And yet—such is human frailty—I don't.

The fact is, I like first nights for their own sake. Partly, no doubt, this fondness for them is due to my being a seasoned frequenter of them. If accident order that you do a thing many times, your nature, imperceptibly, adapts itself to the function. Even if the thing be not, at first and in itself, congenial to you, it will become really congenial at last. The gods gave us Habit, lest the world, that mechanical toy which they had made for their laughter, should disappoint them by stopping and heeling over with a gr-r-r-r very soon after it had been wound up. I do not, however, mean to imply that I ever had a distaste for first nights. On the contrary, I always regarded them as rather a "treat." But now they are more than that to me. They are an integral part of my life, a recurring pleasure to which I look keenly forward. And that, I regret to say, is one of several reasons why I ought to keep away from them. The spirit

in which I go is not the right spirit for a critic. I ought to go in a mood of serious æstheticism, merely to see a play acted by mimes on a stage. As it is, my mood is freaked with a kind of festivity. I have a kind of vague sense that I am "going it." Of course, we all have more or less of this feeling whenever we go to a theatre. When we open a book, or pass the turn-stile of a picture gallery, our hearts do not leap irrelevantly. But a theatre has magic of its own. The old Puritanism still survives just enough to make us feel that we are being rather bold. Besides, was not a pantomime the most mysterious, rare, delirious joy of us when we were small children, the most brilliant occasion for "sitting-up," the least exhaustible topic for weeks after? We cannot, even now, quite rid ourselves of the idea that there is in a theatre something which makes for exhilaration. And this idea is fostered by the hour at which plays are acted. Whatever is done after dinner has an air of recreation—our senses override our thoughts, making fribbles of us. For this reason, I hope that when Mr. William Archer opens (as I trust he will, in the teeth of incivism and stupidity) his Ideal Theatre, the curtain will be rung up every morning not later than 9.30 A.M. That, I take it, is the hour when we are most receptive of serious art. Of course, the aim of drama, as of all arts, is to give pleasure; but before we can hope to raise drama to the level of other arts we must undermine, by every means

in our power, the custom of regarding the theatre as a jolly place in which to digest food and sit in amity with our fellow-creatures. "Let us away with the glamour of the theatre!" is a hard saying, perhaps; but right and necessary, for all that. And never has the theatre so much glamour as on the first night of a play. Never is it so fascinating in itself. The familiar faces in the audience; the mutual bows, smiles, hand-shakes, hand-waves; the sprightliness of it all, and the frantic self-importance—these are gusts by which I, having a sociable temperament, am quickly carried off my feet. We are about to see something which has never been seen, and our anxiety to know what it will be like is eclipsed by pride in our strange privilege of being on the spot. That, in its turn, is eclipsed by the privilege of seeing and being seen by one another. In fact, it is almost as difficult to see a play at a first night as to see pictures at a private view. Apart from the social element at a first night, there is also the sentimental element, still more blinding to me. I cannot help remembering how much depends, for how many people, on the success or failure of the play. I think of the over-wrought manager, and of all it means to him. I see the mimes less as figures in a play than as men and women hoping for good "notices" in the newspapers, hoping they will not "fluff," wondering whether so-and-so is "in front." I see the box in which the author's family is sitting. I never fail to

recognise that box, and I find myself glancing up to it throughout the play. How awfully calm are they who sit in it! Indifference how Olympian is theirs! Yet, if one watch them closely, one will see interchanges of encouraging smiles, pressure of hands, and other tokens that they are mortal. At the fall of the curtain, they keep up a vigorous applause under the ledge of the box; they shoot glances of scorn and hatred and defiance at the Gallery if there are any "dissentient voices" there. And in every entr'acte there will be mysterious retreats to the back of the box, where, maybe, pale in the impenetrable shadow, stands he whose work I have come to criticise. What drama could he write that would match, in human poignancy and significance, the spectacle of his box? Is it wonderful that my eyes wander to his box so often? "Perhaps not," he might answer. "But it would be more fair to me if you would come and see my play on the second or third night." And I should be bound to admit the pertinence of his reply. Or perhaps I should plead that I had been exaggerating. That is a plea which I might fairly make. It is true that the author's box always fascinates and touches me, and that the social aspect of a first night is distracting, also; but, on the whole, I am able to keep my attention fairly well fixed on the play. There are more really valid objections to a first night. One of them I have already noted: few mimes can, on a first night, do justice to them-

selves, and, accordingly, it is unfair to judge them. Another is that a good play seems, in its first performance, better than it would seem to one in any other performance, and that a bad play seems worse. All dramatic critics would, I think, bear me out on this point. Seeing a play for the second time, they must all have often wondered why they were so very emphatic, what reason they had for all those epithets. Nor is the explanation at all remote. Excitement, as we all know, is contagious, and the public at a first night is always in a state of peculiar excitement. The most detached creature in the world cannot help being to some degree affected by it. Insensibly, the balance of his judgment is disturbed. I do not mean that loud cheers and applause will make him think the play good, or that groans will incense him against it; the effect may be, as it tends to be in my case, the exact reverse. The point is that he is infected by the audience's excitement. His nerves are strung up to an unnatural pitch, even before the curtain has risen. All his impressions are tinged with hysteria. Therefore, if I really had the interests of the drama at heart, and if I really wished to do my full duty to my readers, I should take my imaginary playwright's advice, and go on the second or third night. Nay! I should go on the second night *and* on the third. No critic is able to criticise a play rightly after seeing it but once. If he write for a daily paper he has to exhaust himself with the

effort to remember every turn of the plot, in order that he may write a clear *précis*. If he write for a weekly paper, he has to be on the alert for something which will make the basis for a theory—some salient feature on which he can fasten an idea. In neither case can he derive any of that untrammelled pleasure, emotional or intellectual, which a work of art should excite in him. Therefore, I suggest, let him go in a private capacity to the second night, and as a critic to the third. From the first night let him be absent. So will he have the chance of writing something really fine and just. Will the critics, I wonder, be swayed by this counsel of perfection? Not I, for one. Few plays deserve to be seen at all; on the other hand, I grow more and more fond of first nights.

HISTORIC CHARACTERS AND THE STAGE

January 27, 1900.

THERE was a memorable experiment in a melodrama lately seen by me at the Princess' Theatre. The scene was Hyde Park—a review of troops ordered to the front, a stageful of supers in khaki. While the orchestra played the National Anthem, there appeared a landau, in which sat three female supers. One of them was meant to represent the Queen; the other two, Princesses. Yet I, who am an emotional loyalist, was quite unmoved by the sight of them. Of course, they were not really of the blood royal, not the real persons. But that does not explain my apathy. I have thrilled at the sight of Cleopatra on the stage, though I knew that she whom I saw was not really Queen of Egypt. In fact, I am as illudible in theatres as any one else. Why, then, did not the occupants of the landau stir my heart? This question suggests another: how far is it artistically possible to introduce into a play the figures of men or women who are known to exist or to have existed in real life?

Obviously, it is not well to show us a physically inexact representation of one whom we have all seen, whose appearance we know exactly. The representation must be exact; else, illusion is

obviously impossible. At the Princess', the representation was not exact. Indeed, I have seldom seen any one less like the Queen than the lady chosen by the management to represent her. Even had she herself carried any conviction to me, the two Princesses, picturesquely tousled and attired in the gaudiest and most unguelfish fashion, would immediately have robbed me of it. In point of fact, though the trick might have been done better than it was, it could not, in any circumstances, have come off. It is (practically) impossible to make on the stage a satisfactory representation of any one who is well known to us by sight; and even if the (practically) impossible feat were achieved we should be not illuded, but merely startled and amused. Thus it seems that notable living persons ought not to be introduced into plays. Does the same rule apply to the illustrious dead? Let me take the case of the Duke of Wellington. I never saw him. My knowledge of his appearance is derived from various prints, engravings, paintings, which, none of them exactly tallying with another, give me a general impression of him. An actor might be able to satisfy this impression of mine, without satisfying the people who actually saw him. The appearance of Mr. Fulton, in a dreadful play called "The Days of the Duke," was quite good enough for me. But did I derive the necessary illusion that the Duke was before me? Did the carefully-built bridge on Mr. Fulton's nose span

the yawning gulf between illusion and me? Never for one moment. I knew quite well, could not for one moment rid myself of the knowledge, that here was a sound young actor, who had never saved his country and would never have his windows broken by his idolaters. On the other hand, I remember a play in which I had a real illusion of the Duke. In the third act of "Rosemary," the characters, as you may remember, were assembled in an upper room, waiting to see the pageant of the Queen's Coronation. One of them, who was looking out of the window, suddenly cried "Here's the Duke!" All rushed to the window, cheered, waved their handkerchiefs, crying "The Duke! The Duke!" I had a real illusion that the slim, bent figure was riding by on the big horse, stiffly saluting them. But had they said "See! He dismounts! He's coming up the stairs!" and had he come in, however well made-up, on however good a pretext, I know that my illusion would have left me precipitately. It is, indeed, much safer to keep great historical figures "off." In "Julius Cæsar," one believes in Cæsar so long as he does not appear. Such, at least, was my experience at Her Majesty's. When he was on the stage, presto! the illusion was gone. Again I saw the solid bridge on Mr. Fulton's nose, and again (so to speak) I would not trust myself on it. Yet Mr. Fulton was dignified and sonorous. Had he played Antony, or Brutus, or Cassius, I should have been illuded by him. And

yet again, were not Antony, Brutus, and Cassius great historical figures, in their degrees? And Cleopatra, by whom I have been illuded on the stage, was not she, in her sex, as great as Cæsar even? Why does Cæsar leave me cold? It is because Shakespeare has not risen to the conception of him, and has made him a mere shadow. If he presents a great historical figure, the dramatist must also be careful to make a great part. It is not enough to bring the figure on and let him take his chance of impressing the audience by his name. Small historical figures can be brought on in subordinate parts and be accepted quite readily by the audience. But one does not accept Cæsar, unless the dramatist has charged the creation with something of the vast significance which the real Cæsar has for us. One is merely amused or offended, and sorry for the actor who is cast for the part. When I said just now that it was "safer" to keep such figures "off," I was remembering how very few dramatists ever were themselves great enough to bring them on successfully. Shakespeare was great enough for the trick, though he bungled in the case of Cæsar. And if he was great enough, Mr. Stephen Phillips must, presumably, be great enough, also. But I doubt whether there is any other living dramatist whom I would quite readily trust. And so I would lay it down as a general rule for dramatists, that the very illustrious dead had better be let lie, for the present.

They who are living are to be barred for a reason which I have already suggested, and for another reason. Shakespeare was able to re-create Cleopatra, because she, like Hecuba, was nothing to his audience. He could not have re-created Elizabeth, because she was much to it—part and parcel of its times, indissociable from its realities. She had not arrived at the time when it were possible to be useful in fiction. Living characters cannot even be used "off;" even so they would destroy verisimilitude. Moreover, figures of men not actually living, but belonging to the immediate past, must not be used for theatrical purposes. Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Parnell, Lord Randolph Churchill—the time is not yet come for them to be susceptible of any fictional treatment. It seems almost unnecessary to point this out; but I once saw a play called "General Gordon" (in which the chief part was acted by a favourite provincial actor with raven curls and a lisp), and so, perhaps, the warning is not really quite superfluous. When actual figures *do* become a fit subject for the dramatist it is almost impossible to determine. There is not, as in questions of copyright, any exact limit. One cannot say exactly how long an interval must elapse after a great man's death before we may, without breach of taste, discuss publicly his private failings—one cannot fix the date of his falling out of actual life into history. Likewise, one cannot say how soon he may be treated in drama.

"AU REVOIR"

February 3, 1900.

It is almost a year since Mount Moore was in eruption. It is almost a year since from that flammivomous summit the torrents of baleful lava rolled down over London, entombing (for ever, as we thought) Mr. William Archer, Mr. George Alexander, Mr. Pinero and other men of sin. The flames have subsided, the torrents dried, the smoke has drifted from between us and the sky, and the victims have surprised us by emerging, scathed but not shrivelled, and going about their business. But I have ever kept my telescope towards the yawning summit, supposing that some more awful vengeance surely would issue. And now, indeed, the eruption has begun again. In this month's number of the "Fortnightly Review," Mr. Moore has a "Preface to 'The Bending of the Bough.'" But how different from last year's preface to "The Heather Field"! How very mild! If Primrose Hill were to pose as a volcano, it would not affright us less. Indeed, dealing with Mr. Moore's latest manner, I must altogether drop the simile of the volcano. Let me say rather, a little chaste star, infinitely remote, wistful, innocuous, unassuming.

"Much have I striven, and some things have I

compassed, and known sorrow and fear and the lovelessness of men. But now go I back to my own land, even to that dear land overseas whence I came. For there my heart is." So, in the legend, spoke a hero of whom Mr. Moore has never reminded me much. So speaks Mr. Moore in the "Fortnightly." True, he and Mr. Martyn and Mr. Yeats "have turned our backs on London as men turn their backs on a place which has ceased to interest them," but Mr. Moore, at least, shakes the dust off his feet with a very gentle kick, and looks back not without a smile and a sigh to the abandoned city. "We did not," he murmurs, "decide on our homeward journey without having considered the reformation of London. After some doubts, some hesitation, it suddenly came upon us that it was impossible." This, I confess, thrills me, intrigues me vastly. I long to know the exact moment of the fateful apocalypse. Was the world unconsciously revolving, and we, its parasites, were we behaving quite in our usual manner, making "the same old crush at the corner of Fenchurch Street," and exciting ourselves over the trivialities of our noisy humdrum, when, suddenly in some sequestered room where they were sitting silent, Mr. Moore, Mr. Martyn and Mr. Yeats started from their chairs and said "We must pack up our things"? At that moment, did no shudder run through the metropolis, as through one over whose grave some one is walking? Did no stars fall, nor

statues perspire? *Can* such a seed be dropped without the whole earth quivering under its impact?

But perhaps I overrate the significance of Mr. Moore's article. Certainly, if Mr. Moore were to spend the rest of his life away from us, our loss would be very great; we should lose an unique and most stimulating person. But I suspect that he will not really withdraw himself for long. A play of his will be produced, next month, at the Irish Literary Theatre in Dublin, and this simple fact is quite enough to account for his elaborate valediction. It is one of Mr. Moore's peculiarities that whatever is uppermost in his mind seems to him to be the one thing in the world, and he cannot conceive that there will ever be room for anything else. He surveys the history of the world, in order to show that Art cannot exist longer in England, and that it is probably about to exist in Ireland. He argues that great movements in Art have sprung only in nations after some great national struggle; that, so soon as a nation becomes great and wealthy and replete, Art cannot continue to exist in it, and never returns to it; that England, accordingly, is no place for him, and that Ireland is. "It is impossible," he says, "to write plays in England except for money." But is it? Have not we at least one thriving society for the production of plays written for love? Such plays, according to Mr. Moore, "are offered to the Irish rather than to the English public." But they are not offered

to the Irish public. They are offered quietly, in a little hall, to a few Irish people. The Irish public does not want them at all. That, however, does not prevent them from being written. Nor does the indifference of the English public prevent Englishmen from writing similar plays and getting them produced. It may be that the Irish Literary Theatre marks the beginning of a great dramatic literature in Ireland, and that in England there will be no more great plays. Personally, I have great hopes of the Irish Literary Theatre; but I do not, on the other hand, despair of drama in England. I do not agree with Mr. Moore that Art cannot return to a nation. The genius of Elizabethans has not prevented the Victorian era from producing a great literature of its own. Why should it prevent us from an outburst of great plays? For my own part I think it improbable that the great wave of Victorian literature will recoil without washing up some fragments, at least, of great drama; and I am keeping a hopeful eye on the shore. However, my aim is not to refute Mr. Moore's interesting theories, but to assure myself and my readers that Mr. Moore is not lost to us for ever. His, as I have said, is a mind violently exclusive, and present disgust of London is amply explained by the impending production in Dublin. But even if the Keltic Renascence prove to be the most important movement ever made in Art it will not long enchain him. His blazing passions burn themselves out

rapidly, and the white-hot core gapes for other fuel. At heart he is a dilettante, though he differs from most of his kind in that his taste does not diverge simultaneously to one thing and another. All his taste is concentrated always on one thing, but nothing can hold him long. That he was born in Ireland does not imply any probability that he will stay there. For the moment, he is fulfilled of patriotism, but only because the kind of Art in which he is immersed happens to have sprung from his native soil. A few weeks hence, if I hear that he has appeared in Edinburgh and declared that to be the only place to live in, I shall not be surprised. And I know that the prodigal will come back, at last, to London, the city which has harboured him through most years of his maturity. I hope I shall go to see his play in Dublin, for I suspect that it will be his only contribution to Irish Art. Already, even in his article, I find signs that his allegiance is straying. When he says "It were better to delight a moment in the little candour of the robin, and to admire the coral hedge of the irreparable year," I feel sure that he will soon be trumpeting the immortality of Mrs. Meynell.

TWO PERFORMANCES OF SHAKESPEARE

February 24, 1900.

Mr. F. R. Benson is an Oxford man, and he is in the habit of recruiting his company from his university. Insomuch that, according to the "Daily Chronicle," "the influence of university cricket has been seen in the cricket fields of many provincial towns visited by Mr. Benson's company, as well as that of university culture on the boards of the local theatres. In the summer months cricket by day and dramatic art in the evening is a rule which he follows as far as possible." A delightful existence! The stumps are drawn, the curtain is rung up. All day long the sun shines while Mr. Benson and his merrymen wring from the neighbourhood respectful admiration of university cricket. But, when the shadows of the wickets lengthen across the pitch, the call-boy appears, and the tired but victorious mimes go to doff their flannels and to don the motley. I repeat, a delightful existence! But one cannot help wondering what Mr. Vincent Crummles would have thought of it. "Trace the influence of university cricket and university culture on histrionic art at the close of the nineteenth century" is likely to be a

favourite question when the Drama, at length, gets its chartered Academy, with power to set examination-papers. University culture imbues the mime with some sense of blank verse, and saves him from solecisms in pronunciation. University cricket keeps his body in good training, enables him to move on the stage with the more agility and to posture with the more grace. In the old days, before the cult of athletics, and before acting was regarded as a genteel art, the strolling mimes were mostly illiterate and mostly fat. They knew little of anything but their art, and they spent their days in drinking, and smoking, and talking about their performances. They were not gentlemen, and as men they were very poor creatures indeed, vastly inferior to their successors. But as artists ? That is another matter. The better man is not necessarily the better mime, nor does even gentility carry one very far in art. Art is a mysterious thing, in which cads and weaklings may often excel, and gentlemanly athletes may often fail. The old strollers lived a life of degradation ; but it does not follow that their excess in alcohol and nicotine hurt them as mimes. The new strollers play cricket and other games, and are healthy and reputable fellows ; but they do not necessarily act the better for that. Indeed, I should say (though it is a hard saying) that the old method was better than the new. The art of acting, more even than any other art, demands that the artist live on his nerves :

the more highly-strung his nerves, the better he will act. The old stroller, living a sedentary life and indulging overmuch in stimulants, was a bundle of nerves. The new stroller is a bundle of muscles. Of course, as I have suggested, muscles are a very good thing for a mime to have. The ideal mime would be a bundle of nerves *and* muscles. But alas! the two things do not go together, and nerves are infinitely the more important of the two. The old stroller would cut a sorry figure on the cricket pitch: he would muff all his catches and be bowled out first ball. But on the wooden boards, behind the footlights, he seems to us more admirable than the members of Mr. Benson's eleven —company, I mean.

Alertness, agility, grace, physical strength—all these good attributes are obvious in the mimes who were, last week, playing "Henry the Fifth" at the Lyceum. Every member of the cast seemed in tip-top condition—thoroughly "fit." Subordinates and principals all worked well together. The fielding was excellent, and so was the batting. Speech after speech was sent spinning across the boundary, and one was constantly inclined to shout "Well *played*, sir! Well played *indeed*!" As a branch of university cricket, the whole performance was, indeed, beyond praise. But, as a form of acting, it was not impressive. Not one of the parts was played with any distinction. There was not one that stood out at the time or was remembered later.

Every one rattled along and bustled about and gave one the impression that he was a jolly, modest, high-spirited, presentable young fellow in private life; and there one's impression of him ended. The whole thing was very pleasant, but it was not Shakespearian acting. It had neither the sonorous dignity of the old school, nor the subtle intelligence of the modern metropolitan school. It was simply what the dramatic critics call "adequate," meaning "inadequate." Now, there are some Shakespearian plays of which "adequate" performances are tolerable. But "Henry the Fifth" is not one of them. It should be done brilliantly, splendidly, or not at all. Only the best kind of acting, and the best kind of production, could make it anything but tedious. Except a few purple patches of poetry, it contains nothing whatsoever of merit. It is just a dull, incoherent series of speeches, interspersed with alarums and excursions. As a spectacle, it might be made much of. Mimes might, by exercise of much imagination, make the speeches interesting and impressive. With a very keen sense of character, they might give life and individuality to the puppets. But, since Mr. Benson's system precludes spectacle, and since cricket tends to exhaust in its devotees the energy which might otherwise be spent in cultivating imagination and sense of character, those members of the public who forgot to visit the Lyceum last week lost very little and (I am tempted to say)

escaped much. Before these words appear, Mr. Benson will have produced "A Midsummer Night's Dream." That will be quite another matter. It is, in itself, a play of surpassing beauty. So are "The Tempest," and "Antony and Cleopatra," and other Shakespearian plays which Mr. Benson is to produce in due course. Even if the performances of them be not better than the performance of "Henry the Fifth," they will be well worth seeing. I trust that Mr. Benson will have a successful season. His enthusiasm for Shakespeare is very laudable and attractive. No one could help wishing him well. But—but he must, really, break himself and his company of this fatal cricketing-habit.

Last Wednesday, in Carpenters' Hall, the Elizabethan Stage Society played the "First Quarto Hamlet," "as it hath been diverse times acted by his Highnesse servants in the Citte of London." The aim of the Society is, expressly, "educational;" and, indeed, Mr. Poel does succeed in teaching us to pity the poor Elizabethans and to be thankful for the realism of the modern theatre. Now and again, however, he combines amusement with instruction. Now and again, he gives a production from which I can derive æsthetic pleasure. The "First Quarto Hamlet" gave me this kind of pleasure. I can imagine that any one who had not seen the authorised "Hamlet" so many times as I have, so many times that he could not regard it as anything but a series of perfect recitations which he

had long known by heart, would have found the production more than a little tiresome. He would have wondered why a garbled and bedraggled version of this most beautiful play should have been produced instead of the original. Reminded that he was there to be educated and not to enjoy himself, he would have protested that he wished to learn about Shakespeare, and not about the havoc which some person or persons unknown had made of Shakespeare's work. He would have inquired, sarcastically, whether Mr. Poel had on his syllabus "The Midsummer Night's Dream" as produced by the late Mr. Augustin Daly, and whether that item would also be called "educational." And I should have been bound to admit that there was some reason in his protest. But I should have pointed out that, according to the best modern authorities, the good of education lies, not in what is actually learned, so much as in the function of learning. And I should have protested that I, for my part, had enjoyed the "First Quarto Hamlet" immensely. To me it came almost as a new play. It was not, of course, a good version of "Hamlet," but still it was "Hamlet." The young prince, "with his noble sorrows and weak rage," was again before my eyes. I could listen to him, be filled with pity for him, see all that encompassed him and all that was in his soul. And it is long since I was able to do that. It is long since Hamlet was real to me, a living and moving figure, something more

than a part in which an ambitious actor was making a hit or not making a hit. And the reason why he now existed again for me is that he was differently presented. The verbal and structural differences between the First and Second Quartos were just enough to create for me a new Hamlet. And so I was grateful to Mr. Poel.

"TESS"

March 3, 1900.

I DO not like to read a novel in an illustrated edition. The process is uncomplimentary either to the author or to myself. It implies that he, on the one hand, is incompetent in one of the essentials of his art: unable to project, through words, the images of his characters; or that I, on the other hand, have not enough imagination to see them for myself. It does not matter to me that some illustrators draw decently, and do their work in personal consultation with the man whose book is entrusted to them, and preserve an intelligent sympathy with his aims. For me, all illustrators are equally objectionable. If I cannot see the characters in a novel, then they are not worth seeing. If I can see them, then any other man's definite presentment of them seems to be an act of impertinence to myself and of impiety to the author. If my first reading of a novel is done from an illustrated edition, I cannot see the characters for myself: my imagination is paralysed, and I can see them only as they are shown in the pictures. Possibly these pictures coincide roughly with what my mind's eye would have achieved for itself. The hero and heroine may be exactly like the hero and

heroine I should have drawn if, having never seen them illustrated and being suddenly endowed with a gift for perfect draughtsmanship, I had been compelled to project upon paper, with pen and ink, the images of them conceived by me. But that (very remote) possibility does not incline me to forgive the illustrator. No embodiment, howsoever nearly accurate, of a mental image can ever satisfy me, can do anything but offend me. The mind's eye and the body's see too differently. The mind's eye sees many things which cannot appear in a picture. It sees things moving and in three dimensions. Also, it is blind to many trivialities of detail which cannot be omitted in an actual picture. It does not say "There is no high-light on the toe of the hero's boots;" for the hero's boots do not occur to it. But in a picture the hero must wear boots, and there must, accordingly, be a high-light on the toe; else the eye of the body would be offended. And this high-light, these boots, do offend the mind's eye. To it they are a superfluity, an encumbrance. So is the cut of the heroine's gown; so are the legs of the chair she sits on, the shape of the lamp, the pattern on the carpet. These things are a nuisance. But in illustrations they are a necessary nuisance. And that is one of the reasons why I shun illustrated editions. Especially do I shun such editions of books which I have read and enjoyed in an un-illustrated form. It is bad enough to have your

imagination cramped from the outset, so that you cannot see the characters otherwise than as they are presented in the wood-cuts or process-blocks. But it is infinitely worse when your imagination, having had free play, and having created for itself a dear gallery, is suddenly confronted and interrupted by the definite projections of some one else's hand. It is only too likely that these new projections, being so definite, will rout the delicate, intangible images which have abided with you. You will mourn over their flight, try in vain to call them back to you and to rally them round you. But they will have been frightened all away. They will not come back to one who has gazed on unspeakable things. You will be left alone with your illustrated edition, and, though you burn it in flames or bury it in a barren field, yet will it always haunt you. "Their eyes met"—"She came slowly along the avenue"—"'Then it is good-bye!'"—"The eminent physician shook his head very gravely"—"'Only tell me that I shall meet her somewhere again!'" All these horrors will abide with you ruthlessly—these nightmares of noble profiles, dramatic attitudes, sun-bonnets, drooping moustaches, elm-trees, French windows, cuffs and collars, rag-tag and bobtail. Certainly, to gaze on the Gorgon's head is less petrifying than to open an illustrated edition of a book which you love.

A dramatised version of a book which you love is like an illustrated edition (and it is—for dramatic

critics—a sight less easily avoided). In the one, as in the other, you have a materialisation of your dreams—if you are very lucky. But I have suggested that even materialisation of one's dreams is painful. Even an actor and actress who corresponded in appearance and voice and manner with your previous notion of hero and heroine would give you a certain measure of pain. But to get such an actor and actress were more difficult even than to get an illustrator who would start from the basis of your own fancy. The chances that you will be affronted at every turn are infinitely greater than in the case of an illustrated book. The voice might be right, or the manner, or the appearance. But you are not likely to get all three. I cannot at this moment think of any actress who could, for example, embody Mr. Hardy's Tess without violating in at least two of these respects my conception of what Tess should be. Nor can I at this moment think of any actress less like my own idea of Tess, in all three respects, than Mrs. Lewis Waller, who was playing the part last week at the Coronet Theatre. Mrs. Waller is an accomplished actress. She is always intelligent, often powerful. In the third act (the scene of the murder), she acted very powerfully indeed; and throughout the play she gave proof of her natural intelligence. But her face has not, I think, one feature in common with the face of Tess; and, as for her voice and manner —well! Tess was a simple, romantic girl, sprung

from the soil of Wessex. Mrs. Waller's voice and manner on the stage are always exceedingly sophisticated and metropolitan. She might go on trying to act Tess till doomsday, yet would never for one moment succeed in demonstrating anything but the impossibility of her task. Mr. William Kittredge was no more successful in the part of Angel Clare. He seemed to be a hearty, robust, commonplace youth, with no nonsense about him. Angel Clare was a dreamer, and the whole story hinged on the fact that there was a great deal of nonsense about him. All Mr. Hardy's skill in the delineation of character had to be employed in order to convince us that Angel Clare really would have left Tess on the wedding-day. It was only by very elaborate means, by a vast number of subtle touches in psychology, that we could be made to believe that he would have acted as he did. In drama, there is little time for this kind of delicate preparation. Such characters as Angel Clare demand of a dramatist an extraordinary amount of skill. What the novelist may explain at his leisure, the dramatist must make clear in a few lines. I do not think that Mr. H. A. Kennedy, the author of this version of "Tess," has contrived to prepare his audience for Angel Clare's conduct in the second act. It seems to me that he relied rather on the chance that the part would be interpreted by some actor who, by his manner and appearance, would lead the audience

to believe him capable of his abnormal behaviour. But dramatists have no business to be so sanguine. They should make it a rule always to expect the worst of their mimes, not the best. They should, so far as they can, contrive every part so that it will carry conviction despite the worst performance imaginable. I do not say that Mr. Kittredge's performance of Angel Clare was the worst imaginable, but it was certainly bad enough to make one regret that Mr. Kennedy had not taken very much more care in writing the part. For the rest, I am quite ready to admit that Mr. Kennedy has written his version of the book with considerable ingenuity. Indeed, I congratulate him on the manner in which he has done his task. There was only one way in which it could have been done much better. That way, of course, was not to do it at all. "Tess," more than most books, should have been saved from the stage. Some novels, as being merely melodramatic, deserve no better fate than being foisted upon the stage. Others, as containing no melodrama at all, and being, therefore, unlikely to attract the public, are allowed to rest within their covers; but, if they were dramatised, at any rate they would not be degraded so unspeakably as is "Tess." For "Tess," as a book, is full of melodrama. The melodrama in it is made beautiful by the charm of Mr. Hardy's temperament. One sees it softened and ennobled through a haze of poetry. One would vow, in reading it, that it was sublime

tragedy. But come the adapter, however reverent, and how fearfully one's eyes are opened! A seduction, a deception, an intercepted letter, a confession, a parting, a broker in the house, a relapse into impropriety, a taunt, a murder, a reunion, a death scene—that is all that "Tess" is when it is translated to the stage. A wronged heroine, a villain, a prig, some comic rustics—these, and nothing more!

"DON JUAN'S LAST WAGER"

March 10, 1900.

"Mr. Martin Harvey's Latest Impersonation" would have been an apter title. And to all the characters pleasant English names should have been given, and a pleasant English background. Not that these changes would have made the play a good one; but they would, at least, have mitigated its absurdity. Don Juan! "Some one else of the same name!" were surely the guess made by poor Juan, could he be lured one evening from the infernal flames to which Gonzalo beckoned him, and be consigned to the auditorium of the Prince of Wales' Theatre. No scorn would flash from under his tired eyelids. No sardonic grin would twist his still noble features. Neither to mirth nor to resentment would he be moved. He simply would not know himself in the *beau rôle* of Mr. Martin Harvey. As to the play, I am afraid he would be terribly bored by it, and that his one emotion would be a hope that perhaps it was not eternal. The true Don Juan, as portrayed by Tirso or by Molière, is not a *beau rôle*, not a "sympathetic" part. He is altogether brutal—a superb brute, but still (to a modern English audience, at any rate) a brute. It is not in such a part that a

modern English actor, who has made a hit in romance, cares to show himself on the stage.

If he wished to play Juan at all, he would, of course, insist on a sympatheticised Juan—a Juan whose faults were the result of a careless upbringing rather than of original sin—a Juan with his heart in exactly the right place. Mr. Martin Harvey, for some mysterious reason, seems to have wished to play Juan. "Don Juan's Wager," as produced at the Prince of Wales', is the result. It is a curious play. It reminded me irresistibly of a tract which, some years ago, was thrust into my hand by a fellow-passenger on the Great Northern Railway—"When the Wicked Man, or, How Albert Simpson, after having lived in sin for upwards of fifteen years, found the light." Only, I was far less impressed by the play than I had been by the tract. Perhaps because it was on a night journey (when one's nerves are always somewhat overstrung) that I received and read this tract, I was, at the time, quite deeply impressed by the history of Albert Simpson. I do not remember the exact means by which he found the light, and probably they were not less miraculous than those by which Mr. Harvey's Juan finds it. But miraculous conversions, though they may sometimes be impressive in tracts, never are impressive in plays. In plays one is sceptical enough to demand a certain evolution of character, or, at least, some great stress of likely circumstances, as a prelude to the con-

version. There is no such evolution, no such stress, in the conversion which overtakes Mr. Harvey's Juan on the Banks of the Guadalquivir. Soledad, whom he has duly abducted, weeps while he is making love to her. "Why do you weep?" he asks her. "Because," she falters, "because God has made you so good." She puts her hand in his. That is enough for Juan. The peripety is over in a moment. Behold him quite good! Enter Don Luis, whose betrothed he has stolen. Juan says "I have done you an irreparable injury!" and wildly abases himself. Luis is surprised at the change in his rival's temper. Juan proceeds to explain that Soledad has made him good: "Man, she just put her little hand into mine!" &c, &c. Enter the Commendador, furious at the abduction of his daughter. More protestations: "See! I kneel to you!" "I had never met a good woman before!" &c, &c. Juan has become a thoroughly "sympathetic" part. But the Commendador will have none of him, and insists on a duel. Juan is forced to defend himself. Of course, he does not kill the Commendador, the father of her whom he loves; that would not be at all "sympathetic." The Commendador kills himself. "You threw yourself on my sword!" cries Juan over the prostrate body, eager to put himself right with the audience. "Poor fellow!" sighs the audience. "How dreadful for him to feel that he has been a means of suicide to the father of her whom he loves!

He is not in the least to blame, of course. We quite see that. But it is very dreadful, all the same. Poor, dear fellow!" So the death of the Commendador is but another leaf in the sudden laurel-wreath of Mr. Harvey's Juan. The old legend is altogether transformed. Since Juan did not kill the Commendador, and since he was only too anxious to lead Soledad to the altar, the subsequent behaviour of the statue strikes the audience as perfectly brutal—a malignant persecution which makes the victim more poordearfellowesque than ever. That the statue finally forgives him does not excuse what it has done. What is there to forgive? Juan may have been "wild," like many other young men. But he has made ample atonement. He has suffered terribly. Heavens! how that man has suffered! The curtain falls slowly while Soledad, who has also become a statue (except as to her face, which retains its previous colouring), and stands on a pedestal between two little white German angels designed by Mr. George Frampton, A.R.A., bends gracefully sideways and clasps her marble arms around the hero of the play. But the audience feels that no amount of tenderness will compensate poor Juan for all that he has gone through. Thus the ending is not altogether happy. Never mind! "The Only Way" did not end happily.

I have been implying that the heart of the audience bleeds for Mr. Harvey's Juan. I may or

may not be right. What is quite certain is that Mr. Harvey himself must have expected that heart to bleed freely; else he would never have outraged a very fine legend by producing so fatuous a version of it. That he did not wish to play the true Juan I can well understand. The true Juan, as I have said, was a brute; and Mr. Harvey's method in acting is the very reverse of brutal: he excels in ethereal romance. But an ethereally romantic Juan is an obvious contradiction in terms. Juan is, literally, a "term". He has passed into all languages. He stands out, for all peoples, as a definite type. And if his "Last Wager," despite the elaborate manner in which it has been produced, fails to please the British public, it will be because even the British public has too clear a conception of the true Juan to be coaxed into admiration of any one who, however prettily disguised with whitewash, bears the same name. I do not say that this will be so. Nor do I much care. The taste of the British public is not a subject in which I take a keen interest. But about British acting I do care enough to be still wondering why on earth Mr. Harvey wished to appear as Don Juan. And about British drama I care enough to deplore the result of his wish. Some of the dramatic critics have suggested that Mrs. Cunninghame Graham, whose name is printed with Zorilla's under the title of the play, may be responsible for the emasculation of the legend. It is only fair to that lady to say

that the larger part of the blame lies on the shoulders of Zorilla, whose play she translated, and to record a persistent rumour that she had nothing whatever to do with such deviations as have been made from Zorilla's scheme and text.

At the Lyceum, Mr. Benson has been alternating "Hamlet" and "The Rivals." The latter play needs "go" in its interpreters rather than imagination; and, since cricket promotes "go" in its devotees no less than it saps imagination, Mr. Benson's company did far better in Sheridan's play than in Shakespeare's. But Mr. Benson himself, keen cricketer though he is, has little "go" in acting, and his Captain Absolute was suspiciously like his Hamlet. If his Hamlet had been at all distinguished, this likeness might have been condoned. Unfortunately, his Hamlet was dry, wooden, insipid—"adequate," in fact. His production, however, was interesting, inasmuch as the play was performed straight through, without "cuts," and thus achieved a freshness which is not usually to be found in it. One was enabled to see the King and Polonius in all their glory—and glorious parts they are! It is a pity that no "star," in producing the play, takes one of these parts himself and proportionately cuts down the other part and the part of Hamlet. The play is so vast, so full, that a versatile "star" could triumph on three consecutive nights, in a perfectly stelline manner, without repeating his performance. Might

not the experiment be made? There is one other train of thought which Mr. Benson's production opens to me, and it is one which might well be pursued further than I can pursue it here. Mrs. Benson, who was Ophelia, played the mad-scene more shockingly than I (who am not unimaginative) could ever have imagined it being played. I should not be so ungracious as to call attention to her performance, were it not that Ophelias *in petto* might possibly profit by my remarks. About Shakespeare it should be remembered that he was both a dramatist and a poet. The less his lines are acted the more clearly is their poetry apparent. Dramatic emphasis, pauses, facial play, are all inimical to the music of words, which is best served by quiet recitation. But quiet recitation saves for the words their music at the expense of their dramatic force. And thus, as a rule, the best Shakespearian acting is a kind of compromise between poetry and drama. But there were some moments when Shakespeare was merely dramatist, others when he was merely poet. Ophelia's mad-scene is mere poetry. Ophelia is a nonentity throughout the play: sane or mad, she is nothing to us. If in her sanity she had been made interesting, then her final lunacy would have some dramatic effect. There would be reason for playing the mad-scene more or less realistically, for sacrificing more or less of its beauty. As it is, such a proceeding is a mere impertinence. In recent years, most Ophelias

have gone in the direction of realistic lunacy, and we have suffered accordingly. But no actress has gone so far, and made us fare so ill, as Mrs. Benson, who groans and gasps, glares, shrieks and gesticulates, so indefatigably as to make havoc of every beautiful line the poet has put into her mouth. The medical staff of Colney Hatch might find much to interest them in her antics and her kakophonies. But intelligent lovers of Shakespeare can only shudder, can only wonder. I wish that all promising young actresses could see this performance. Their sight of it would save us some suffering in the future. Here is a clear case for a "professional matinée."

"CYRANO" IN ENGLISH

April 28, 1900.

One evening, some years ago, I had been dining with a friend who was supposed to have certain spiritualistic powers. As we were very much bored with each other, I proposed that we should have a *séance*. Though doubtful whether I should be "sympathetic," he was quite willing to try. The question arose, with what spirit should we commune? He suggested Madame Blavatsky. I was all for Napoleon Buonaparte. Finally—by what process I forget—we agreed on Charlotte Corday. The lights having been turned out, we sat down at a small table. Placing the tips of our fingers on it, we thought of Charlotte Corday with all our might. Many minutes went slowly by, and the table showed no signs of animation. My friend said it was very strange. After a fruitless hour or so, he seemed to be so much annoyed that I thought it would be only kind to press my fingers in such a way as to make the table tilt duly towards me for a moment and then tilt back. I did this. "Are you there?" asked my friend, in a low voice. I pressed again, producing the requisite number of taps for "Yes." "Who are you?" my friend rejoined. "Charlotte" I rapped out. I continued to rap appropriate

answers to my friend until I thought he had had enough enjoyment for one evening. The spirit having evidently withdrawn to its own sphere, he turned up the lights, pronounced the *séance* a great success, and told me that I seemed to have some power as a medium. But I have never taken the advice he gave me to develop this power, and I recall our evening merely because I was irresistibly reminded of it, the other night, when I saw the English version of "Cyrano" at Wyndham's Theatre. I saw, with my mind's eye, the manner in which the whole play was written. There were Mr. Stuart Ogilvie and Mr. Louis N. Parker, seated solemnly on either side of a small table, trying to raise the spirit of Cyrano. "It is very strange," said Mr. Ogilvie, frowning; "the table does not seem to move." Genial Mr. Parker, hating that his friend should be disappointed, brought illicit pressure to bear on the table. "Are you there?" asked the author of "Hypatia," in a broken whisper. "Yes," rapped Mr. Parker, smiling inwardly. And so the mockery was inaugurated. So the collaboration went forward, hollow rap by rap, laboriously, portentously, with no more real evocation than was got in the *séance* I have described.

Alas, that any pretence of raising this ghost need have been made among us! When first M. Coquelin brought M. Rostand's play to England I expressed a pious hope that it would not be translated. Of course, I knew well that it would be. Cyrano, the

man, got safely home from the Hôtel de Bourgogne, routing with his own sword the hundred rascals who lay in wait for him; but Cyrano, the play, would not escape its English obsessors so easily. It might slip through the fingers of one and another of the hundred desperate actors who were thirsting to produce it. It might keep the whole gang at bay for a while. But in the end it would, inevitably, be taken. And, of course, it could only be taken dead: the nature of things prevented it from being taken alive. I dare say that I explained that fact at the time. But of what use was it to argue against a foregone conclusion? Cyrano, in the original version, is the showiest part of modern times—of any times, maybe. Innumerable lime-lights, all marvellously brilliant, converge on him. And as he moves he flashes their obsequious radiance into the uttermost corners of the theatre. The very footlights, as he passes them, burn with a pale, embarrassed flame, useless to him as stars to the sun. The English critic, not less than the English actor, is dazzled by him. But, though he shut his eyes, his brain still works, and he knows well that an English version of Cyrano would be absurd. Cyrano, as a man, belongs to a particular province of France, and none but a Frenchman can really appreciate him. An Englishman can accept the Gascon, take him for granted, in a French version, but not otherwise. Cyrano is a local type; not, like Quixote or Juan, a type of abstract

humanity which can pass unscathed through the world. Nor is he, like Quixote or Juan, a possible individual, such as one might meet. Even in Gascony he were impossible. He is the fantastically idealised creation of a poet. In M. Rostand's poetry, under the conditions which that poetry evokes, he is a real and solid figure, certainly. But put him into French prose, and what would remain of him but a sorry, disjointed puppet? Put him into English prose (or into the nearest English equivalent that could be found for M. Rostand's verse) and—but the result, though it can be seen at Wyndham's Theatre, cannot be described. All this I foresaw, being a critic. But the actors, not they. Creatures of impulse, they saw nothing but the chance of playing Cyrano. Mr Wyndham happens to be the man who ultimately got it. But as the part does not, from a critic's standpoint, exist, how am I to praise his performance of it? how, as one who revels in his acting, do aught but look devoutly forward to his next production?

"QUO VADIS" AND "NIL PRÆDICENDUM"

May 12, 1900.

THE moon is a chill substitute for the sun, and they who basked and revelled in Mr. Wilson Barrett's "Sign of the Cross" will not, I fear, take kindly to that pale shadow of it which rose, last Saturday evening, from the horizon of the Adelphi. Mr. Stanislaus Stange, though he has copied most of Mr. Barrett's figures with all the passionate minuteness of a Pre-Raphaelite, has not written a good melodrama. The steps in that progress whereby Marcus Vinicius becomes what is called a crease-chyarn are not, as in the case of Marcus Superbus, exciting steps. The progress is very slow. It might almost be described as uneventful, since all the chief marvels of the play happen "off," and are known by us only at second-hand. True, Mr. Stange's stage-directions provide for the burning of Rome before our very eyes. But the London County Council, more zealous for our safety than for our delight, does not permit real holocausts on any stage. Consequently, Nero's fiddling is accompanied by nothing more awesome than some pink magnesian light behind transparent back-cloths.

Nor is Mr. Stange fortunate in his principal mimes. Mr. Taber has not Mr. Barrett's gift (which is, indeed, inalienable) of saying ridiculous things in a ridiculous way and so making them carry conviction. When little Aulus (Miss Valli-Valli) trips off the stage, trilling a roulade of the most sophisticated merriment ever emitted, Mr. Taber looks after her and says "Such innocent laughter is seldom heard in Rome!" so tenderly, so thoughtfully, with an air of such conviction, that the absurdity of the thing becomes almost indecent. Delivered in the quick, staccato voice and with the tremendous gesture of Mr. Barrett, the words would have come as a matter of course. And Miss Lena Ashwell! Why is her uncompromising intelligence, her almost uncouth sincerity, always chartered for melodrama, which it can but ruin, and so kept out of the serious plays which it would glorify? There are a hundred-and-one columbine-actresses who would have played Lygia (that is the queer name of Mr. Stange's heroine!) far better than Miss Ashwell. Utter lack of intelligence and of sincerity is as indispensable for such a part as are technical skill and a beautiful face. Miss Ashwell has the two last requisites, but they are not enough. Not having the first, she would ruin a much better melodrama than "Quo Vadis."

Though the play is bad, if you judge it by any standard of melodramatic art, I cannot join in the critics' outcry that it is objectionable on grounds of

religion. The critics are angry because there are frequent invocations of the Deity, references to the Sermon on the Mount, verbal quotations from Holy Writ. They declare that the Censor ought to have interfered, and speak darkly about "exploiting religion." Why? If in them the old Puritan prejudice were so strong that they held playhouses in abhorrence, I could sympathise with their objection. But the fact that they frequent playhouses is proof presumptive that they take a more liberal and modern view. Not one of them, I believe, will pretend that dramatic art, more than literature, or painting, or any other art, makes for damnation. Nor will they pretend that books and pictures are not decent vehicles for religious sentiment. Do they, yet, pretend that religion must be barred from the stage? I could sympathise with their indignation against "Quo Vadis" if Mr. Stange had treated Christianity in any spirit of levity or scepticism. But he has done nothing of the kind. The whole purpose of the play is to glorify the Christian faith, and the martyrs who died for it, and the pagans who came under its spell. True, the unconverted pagans are dealt with in a somewhat lenient spirit. Nero becomes a kind of buffoon who is not really at all responsible for his actions. Petronius Arbiter becomes as harmless and wholesome as Mr. Pickwick. Allowances are made even for Poppæa. But this tendency to forgive is, surely, all in accord with the doctrine which the play is meant to extol.

Artistically, of course, it is not defensible. From any pedantic standpoint, the play is shocking enough. "Lygia," of course, is an impossible name. "Vitelius" wants another l. "No one thought of that but thee, no one but thee!" is not a plausible translation of anything which Nero—*qualis artifex!*—might have said to Petronius. The whole play is full of such lapses. It will stand no test of history, or of grammar, or of tact. It is very vulgar throughout. That, I suppose, is why the critics object to the religious element in it. If it were a piece of refined work, they would not brand it for irreverence. I admit that there is no real reason why religious plays should always be vulgar. It is quite possible to combine religion with refined art. But to be shocked by a religious play because there is no refined art in it is not less absurd than to dismiss a good play because it has no religious purpose. The critics should remember that what seems vulgar to them does not seem vulgar to the public, and that what seems vulgar to them is really a very potent means of bringing religion home to the public. The method of such plays as "Quo Vadis" is the same kind of method as that which is used by the Salvation Army. As for the hints about "exploiting religion," we have no right whatever to assume that Mr. Stange has not written his play in good faith. If he is an infidel, his insincerity is no worse in him than were any other kind of insincerity. And if (as we must,

in courtesy, assume) he is a religious enthusiast, he has as indisputable a right to his "royalties" as has every vicar to his tithes.

I attended one of the six *matinées* of "You Never Can Tell" at the Strand Theatre. "Such innocent laughter is seldom heard in London," murmured I, echoing Marcus Vinicius; for the house was quite full, and every one in it was roaring with laughter throughout the four acts of the play. Six *matinées*! Why are the commercial speculators who control theatres so obtuse as not to run Mr. Bernard Shaw for all he is worth? I assure them that he would be worth a very great deal to them. In the course of the next decade or two, they will begin to have some glimmerings of this fact. Meanwhile, they shake their heads and purse their lips at the sound of his name. "Very clever, no doubt," they pronounce him; "much too clever; over the heads of the public." Of course his head is over the heads of the public; but I protest that he is no mere cherub, that his feet are set solidly on the ground, and that his body is in touch with the crowd. Even had I not already witnessed Kennington's enthusiasm for "The Devil's Disciple," my visit to the Strand Theatre would have convinced me that Mr. Shaw, as he stands, is a man who might save many managers the trouble of going bankrupt over the kind of plays in which they see "money." I have never fallen into the error of over-rating the public, but I take

this opportunity of insinuating to purveyors of farce and melodrama that the public's stupidity has its limits. Several farces and melodramas have been withdrawn lately after the shortest runs, for the simple reason that they were not good enough for the public. To provide something beneath the public is quite as disastrous as to provide something above it. In the latter case, moreover, disaster is no ignominy. Might it not, sometimes, be courted? Even had it not already been proved that some of Mr. Shaw's plays have qualities which delight the public, it would still be surprising that no manager hastens to give them a fair chance.

It is rather difficult to determine how "You Never Can Tell" ought to be acted. Realism and sheer fantasy are inextricably entangled in the scheme of the play. Serious characters behave ridiculously, ridiculous characters suddenly become serious. Mr. Shaw sends all the persons of his play dashing round sharp corners, colliding with one another, picking themselves up, exchanging hats, and dashing off again. It is all very confusing. Of course, when serious elements and ridiculous elements are combined, the former disappear under the latter, even when they actually preponderate. It is but one step from the serious (or sublime) to the ridiculous, but once you take that step you cannot get back without climbing a sheer precipice. And thus I cannot regard seriously the serious characters and scenes in Mr. Shaw's play. Conse-

quently, it worries me to see any of these characters and scenes seriously played. All would seem quite right and proper, I should have an impression of artistic unity, if Gloria and the dentist were played as extravagantly as Mr. Bohun and the twins. Of course, Mr. Shaw meant Gloria and the dentist to be played seriously, and believes them to be quite serious characters. And so they are, from time to time, as I can see when I read the play. But when I see the play acted, and have no time for detached thought, they are consistently ridiculous, and as I have suggested, serious acting distracts me with a sense of utter incongruity. For artistic reasons, then, the whole play ought to be acted extravagantly, and not, as by the company at the Strand, according to Mr. Shaw's stage-directions. I should enjoy it so, much more. And yet . . . I am not quite sure that I would rather it were played in that way. The very worry and distraction caused by the serious acting were, in a sense, an addition to my delight in the play; for they kept me in mind of the author's peculiar temperament and attitude, of which the manifold contradictions are so infinitely more delightful, even when they make us very angry, than the smooth, intelligible consistency of you or me.

DUSE AT THE LYCEUM

May 26, 1900.

I HAVE often wondered why Sydney Smith said he "would as soon speak disrespectfully of the Equator." After all, the Equator is a mere geographical expression. It casts no weird spell of awe over mankind. On the contrary, seafarers, when they come to it, put on false noses and play practical jokes. For "Equator" read "Duse," and then the remark has point. There never was an influence so awe-inspiring as Duse. At her coming, all the voices of the critics are hushed. Or rather, they are uplifted in unisonant dithyrambus. The heaven is rent with superlatives. And these are not the bright little superlatives we flick at Sarah—imagine any one calling Duse "Eleonora"!—but superlatives of a solemn, almost religious, order. The heaven is rent, and the entrances to the theatre are forthwith besieged by great concourses of people who don't know a word of Italian. Night by night, the English public sits solemnly at the Lyceum (having paid higher prices than it pays for a play in its own language), tremendously bored, tremendously edified. Whatever Duse may be in her own country, here she is a national institution, nay! a supernatural phenomenon, making for

righteousness. If a fiery chariot were seen waiting outside the stage-door, no one would be much surprised.

Last week I said that I would write about Duse as soon as I had "seen her whole répertoire." That sounded a little pompous, perhaps ; as though I were loth to deliver judgment until the whole bulk of the evidence had been adduced. As a matter of fact, it was mere cowardly procrastination. I wished to put off the evil hour of confessing that I could not bow down before the demi-goddess. There are three ways of raving about an actress. One way is to rave about her technique ; another, to rave about her conception of the part she is playing ; another, to rave about her personality. Well ! I am debarred from the first way by the simple fact that I know no more Italian than did poor Mrs. Plornish. This disability is the more humiliating for me, in that I am, evidently, the only critic who labours under it. All the other critics understand the language perfectly ; else they would not be able to tell us unanimously that Duse's technique is beyond reproach. The technique of acting lies in the nice relation of the mime's voice, gesture and facial expression to the words by him or her spoken. Obviously, if those words are for you so much gibberish, you cannot pass any judgment on the mime's technique. You look on, and you see certain movements of the mime's face and hands, and you hear certain inflections of the mime's

voice, but I defy you to know whether they are the right movements, the right inflections. You have to take them on trust. I am willing to take Duse's technique on trust, but I cannot rave about it: I can but consume myself with envy of my colleagues, and wish I had made a better use of my opportunities for learning Italian. It is of no use to have seen the play previously in a language which one understands. I have seen "Magda" and "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," as played by Mrs. Campbell, and have seen them several times. I have seen "Fédora" in English and in French. I have read that tedious effusion, the "Princesse Georges." But I do not (nor do you) remember more than a few disjointed fragments of the dialogue in any scene, and I do not (nor do you) often manage to "spot" one of these fragments when the scene is played in an unknown language. If, by some wild chance, I do "spot" one of them, I am so surprised and excited that I forget to notice the manner of its delivery. Still less, if possible, am I likely to form any personal opinion of Duse's technique in "La Gioconda," of which there is nothing for me but a synopsis. Let her play in English or in French, and then, no doubt, I shall have the felicity of raving with the best of them.

I come now to the second way of raving: raving about the mime's conception of the part played. Here, of course, the unknown language is no barrier; it is merely a stumbling-block. If you have seen or

read the play in a language which you do understand, you will, by dint of ordinary vigilance, be able to form a sound synthetic idea of what the mimes mean the characters to be. I know Magda, Paula, Fédora and the Princesse Georges well enough to praise or disparage an actress' conception of any one of them. I know them well enough to be convinced that Duse has no conception of any one of them. She treats them as so many large vehicles for expression of absolute self. From first to last, she is the same in Fédora as in Magda, in Magda as in Paula, in Paula as in the Princesse Georges, and in the Princesse Georges as in La Gioconda. "Io son' Io," in fact, throughout. Her unpainted face, the unhidden grey of the hair over her brows, are symbolic of her attitude. That Paula is a local English type, and the Princesse Georges a local French type, and that accordingly neither of them can be understood and impersonated by an Italian, matters nothing at all to her. She does not make it part of her business to understand and impersonate. It matters nothing to her that even an Italian equivalent for Paula or the Princesse Georges would be outside her range. "Io son' Io," and she cares not under what alias she comport herself. La Gioconda (known to me, as I have said, only through a synopsis) happens to be an Italian part, and it happens to suit Duse. It might be well realised otherwise than by her, but it could not, I imagine, be realised so fully. If I had never

seen her in any other part, I should have raved about her conception. "She *is* La Gioconda," I should have exclaimed. As it is, I can only remark that La Gioconda is she.

This personal pronoun brings me to the third way of raving. Am I overwhelmed by the personality of Duse? Of course, I ought to be—there can be no question of that. But the wretched fact remains that I am not. True, I see power and nobility in her face; and the little shrill soft voice, which is in such strange contrast with it, has a certain charm for me. I admire, too, her movements, full of grace and strength. But my prevailing emotion is hostile to her. I cannot surrender myself, and see in her the "incarnate womanhood" and "the very spirit of the world's tears" and all those other things which other critics see in her. My prevailing impression is of a great egoistic force; of a woman overriding, with an air of sombre unconcern, plays, mimes, critics and public. In a man I should admire this tremendous egoism very much indeed. In a woman it only makes me uncomfortable. I dislike it. I resent it. In the name of art, I protest against it. . . . Thus do I, devil's advocate, resume my seat, trusting to the judge to suppress any disturbance in court.

DAY-BEFORE-YESTERDAY DRAMA

June 16, 1900.

Had Mr. Gilbert been born into the world twenty-five years later than he was, his Pygmalion would be a very different person from the Pygmalion whom he did actually create in the 'seventies. For in recent years we have much concerned ourselves with the psychology of artists, and have drawn certain conclusions, formulated certain laws, in the light of which Mr. Gilbert's Pygmalion stands forth absurd and unreal, an embarrassed anachronism. Were he a mere dabbler and duffer in sculpture, his temperament, as expressed in the speeches given to him by Mr. Gilbert, might perhaps pass muster. But he is, on the contrary, a great master in his art, brimful of genius. This fact is essential to the scheme of the play. Let us see by what means Mr. Gilbert impressed it on the 'seventies. That great artists are arrogant fellows was known already, and the keynote of arrogance is struck with Pygmalion's first entry. An art-patron has sent his slave to bid the artist wait on him. Pygmalion is furious. So far, so good. But listen to the manner of his fury!

" Tell him from me that, though I'm poor enough,
I am an artist and a gentleman."

Now, if there is one fact we have learnt about great artists, it is that their arrogance is founded solely on their mastery in art. Whether they be gentlemen or not is a question which never troubles them for an instant. If a great artist were to say " I am a gentleman," he would say so merely as one stating a fact; it would never occur to him that the fact could at all enhance his self-esteem or the esteem in which others held him. Also, he would be telling a lie; inasmuch as great art and gentility (I use the word in its proper sense) are things which are not, and cannot be, combined. (This, indeed, is another fact which has been discovered since the 'seventies: that except in the narrow sense of birth, great artists never are gentlemen, and that they are more often not so even by birth, since the strenuous vitality which is needed for great art can hardly be drawn but from peasant-stock.) Pygmalion, having already made himself incredible, proceeds to make himself more so. He declares to his wife Cynisca that wealth is the only thing he can work for. Even the 'seventies must have shied at that. At any rate, Cynisca does. She cannot understand such words

" from one whose noble work it is
To call the senseless marble into life!"

This is Pygmalion's cue. He utters a long-pent

rigmarole to the effect that he can only copy life, not create it, and curses

> " those proud gods,
> Who say, ' Thou shall [*sic*] be greatest among men,
> And yet infinitesimally small."

Of course, this is utterly absurd. A great sculptor may torment himself with his failures to attain absolute perfection in his form; but he would never find fault with the form itself, never wish to outstep its glorious limitations. . . . You think me pedantic, a breaker of butterflies on wheels. " Mr. Gilbert's play," you point out, " is a sheer fantasy. His aim in the first act is to provide some motive for the animation of the statue. You do not, we imagine, object to the idea of an animated statue ? " " Not in the least," I answer. " But," you rejoin triumphantly, " statues never really come to life. Why worry because Mr. Gilbert makes Pygmalion cry out against the cold stone of Galatea ? It is a quite legitimate step in what is, we repeat, a sheer fantasy." Having allowed you to work out your theory to the end, I hasten to contradict it. No fantasy is good unless it be founded in solid reality. None revels more than I in the impossible, but it must spring from the possible, else it is without meaning and gives no illusion. That is an æsthetic truth which any worthy weaver of fantasies would admit. Mr. Gilbert would admit it. Working in the 'seventies before men had begun to take an

interest in the souls of artists, he, doubtless, imagined that he had made his Pygmalion such as a great sculptor might be, and that the ensuing fantasy was well founded. Were he a young man, writing the play to-day, he would have profited by the accumulated data of recent years, and would have cast the legend into quite another scheme. The only profit one can derive from seeing or reading the play as written then is to speculate what it would be like were it written now.

Not that I would advise Mr. Gilbert to revise his play on the lines laid down by me. Had I been at his side in the 'seventies, I should have tried hard to dissuade him from tackling the idea of an animated statue, even though I might then have accepted his notion of a great artist's character and proclivities. For that particular idea is poetical, and Mr. Gilbert, for all his metrical skill, is as unpoetical as any man who ever lived. He has a sense of humour; and there is, of course, no end of fun to be got out of an animated statue. But it could only be got by a humourist who was also a poet, for it lies in the contrast between the prosaic, complicated circumstances of actual life and the poetic, elementary simplicity of the creature woken to them. If the creature be a minx, like Mr. Gilbert's Galatea, with the kind of poor-girl-didn't-know-you-know innocence which is familiar to us in the Music Halls, the fun of the situation is lost utterly. However, the fun is a secondary matter:

it is the poetry of the idea which one wants to have developed, and, as I have just suggested, Mr. Gilbert is the last man who ought to have undertaken the job. When he did so, he saw, no doubt, that the play ought to be mainly poetical. The statue was to awaken and be a woman, and to love him who had fashioned her, and to be loved by him; and he was to suffer evil through love of her, and she, knowing there was no other way of saving him, was to set herself again upon her pedestal and be again a stone. What a chance for a really poetic play! Down sat Mr. Gilbert, in all his power of writing correct blank-verse. But alas! not one spark of poetry would fly from a single iamb. Nor, try as he would, could he see the idea except through a tangle of those complications which were so popular in 'seventy farce. Galatea is told that a soldier is a man who is hired to kill human beings. On comes Leucippus (a soldier, and the prospective brother-in-law of Pygmalion) holding a fawn which he has just shot. Galatea thinks the fawn is a human being, and upbraids the murderer. Exit Leucippus, with fawn. Enter his betrothed. Galatea makes her believe that Leucippus has murdered a woman. Re-enter Leucippus. More cross-purposes, till he, exasperated, exit declaring he will have no more of her. Later, much time is expended in order to lead up to this situation: the elderly art-patron discovered by his wife with his arm round Galatea's waist. Thus, in one way and

another, most of the wearisome rag-tag and bobtail of farce is dragged in to pass the time which Mr. Gilbert had meant to spend in developing the poetry of the idea. Not less tedious are the scenes in which the author, pulling himself together, devotes to the relations between Galatea and Pygmalion. "Relations" is the very word. Galatea that "serio," makes advances towards Pygmalion. He is, at first, inclined to flirt. Then he remembers that his wife (who has gone on a journey) would make herself unpleasant if she found him out. He hustles Galatea away, making arrangements—observe the invincible delicacy of the dramatist!—that she shall sleep in his sister's house. Next day, his wife comes back. She finds him out, and . . . but the last part of the play is of a piece with the first. If you have never seen or read the play, see it or read it now, and you will join me in thanking the Fates who, soon after it was written, sent Sir Arthur Sullivan along and saved its author from writing others like it.

On the whole, I would advise you to read the play rather than to see it. One can skip a book without troubling any one, whereas it is selfish to dodge in and out of a theatre where the mimes are doing their best and most of the audience is anxious to take out its money's-worth in attention. If you do go to the Comedy, you will not see a particularly brilliant performance, though you will see a performance better than the play deserves. I do not

think it is merely because I had been prejudiced in Miss Steer's favour by Mr. Gilbert's rather mean letter about her to the papers that I thought her performance really quite tolerable. Her voice and manner are not those of a simple creature just woken into life, but they are guilelessness itself in comparison with the part as it is written. Moreover, she acts with no little grace. Miss Repton, as Cynisca, reproduced to a nicety the mannerisms with which Miss Julia Neilson made her début, and which she has gradually got rid of. The rest of the mimes do not stand out in my memory, except (by reason of his cloddishness in the part of Pygmalion) Mr. Fuller Mellish.

HELLAS VIA BRADFIELD

June 23, 1900.

THE gods are dead—they, who were deathless. More than one writer has tried to explain this contradiction by evidence that, though Olympus is a desert now, the gods still live on. Heine, Pater and many others have been convinced that the gods do actually live in our midst, humble and unrecognised, earning daily bread by the performance of such odd jobs as their former state may have made them fit for. Vulcan, it is said, works to-day in some village-smithy, Mercury is a Queen's Messenger, Pan is attached to a Punch and Judy show. A fascinating belief! I myself am among the converts to it. Also, being of a habit both sentimental and sanguine, I hope and believe that I may yet live to see the day when these ex-Olympians will be able to throw off their disguises, and to rule over mankind, and be honoured by it, as in the past. But I cannot deny that my cult is a tiny one. Most people, obviously, believe the gods to be (if they ever existed) dead as door-nails. I have never seen so crude a sign of this general scepticism as in the overt theatre of Bradfield College, whither I went, last Tuesday, to see a performance of the "Agamemnon." This theatre,

you must know, is within a stone's throw of the College Chapel. It is an exact replica of a real Attic theatre, and in the midst of its round orchestra stands a little white altar, green-garlanded, inscribed with the legend ΔΙΟΝΥΣΟΣ. Thereon burns a flame—a little flame, pale under the sunlight of an English June. From time to time (even as in Hellas, centuries ago), the Coryphæus tends it, shifting the fuel so that it burn brightlier. In Hellas, however enthralling a play might be, the actors never forgot that their first duty was one of reverence to him from whose worship drama was evolved; and here, at Bradfield, the old reverence is scrupulously reproduced, under the supervision of the Headmaster. He sits there, the Headmaster, watching the play, clad in the scarlet robe worn by him in a Christian university; and among the audience, seated on the stone benches which rise in circular tiers around the arena, are many other clergymen, most of them accompanied by wives, sisters, offspring, pupils. The white altar stands there in the midst, with its garland and its legend and its constant flame; yet not a word of protest is uttered, not a brow contracted. Imagine what would happen if this were a community of early Christians, of men still going in fear and hatred of the idols which they had shattered! But here, in 1900, it does not occur to any one that there is anything at all dangerous or apostatic in rites performed round the altar of the son of Semele. The

clergymen beam through their archæologistic glasses —"very curious and interesting! Very well done indeed!" I hope poor Dionysus (now clerk to a wine-merchant in Oxford Street) had not got a day off, last Tuesday, to see this play. The sight of it would have been the last blow to his pride. Even in his helplessness, he might have been tempted to do something rash—he, whose nature was so resentful of any disrespect that he sent a hideous madness on Lycurgus of Nemea and caused Pentheus of Thebes to be torn in pieces by the fauns. In none of the gods was pride so jealous as in that twice-born god. I have often thought how bitterly he must have chafed at the development of the drama —the transformation of those agrestic revels, held for him, into an artistic celebration of other gods and of mortal heroines and heroes. If ever he go to the play nowadays, he must surely find a grim satisfaction in the sterility to which the dramatic form has come, and the contempt in which it is held.

For me there is no such satisfaction. Indeed, it was primarily as an escape from the stuffy atmosphere of modern drama that I enjoyed my visit to the Greek theatre at Bradfield. Here, at least, I was to see a beautiful play, and to see it, as I soon found, under beautiful conditions. The way to the theatre lay down a long, steep dingle, through whose leaves the sunlight could not penetrate. When I came to the end of it, I seemed to emerge into the

sunlight of ancient history. That altar, that flagged orchestra, those rough-hewn tiers of benches rising from the hollow; and above them, all around, the green trees, and wild flowers in full bloom! A trumpet was blown. A herald came upon the stage, and thrice hailed us—citizens! The minstrels, attired in many colours, trooped across to their appointed places, holding their strange lyres and flutes. With the first notes of their music, slowly and solemnly, through a green avenue that flanks the columns of the stage, came the chorus, *κατὰ ζυγά*—the chorus of Argive Elders, leaning on their staves. Into the round orchestra they trooped, there to sing of Troy, of the gods implacable. To them, through the royal door, came the murderous Queen. After she had hung a chaplet of roses around the gold statue of Aphrodite, she told them of the beacons which proclaimed the war's end. Came the conqueror Agamemnon, in a chariot drawn by Trojan slaves and preceded by his own soldiers. Behind him crouched one in whose face was terror. She who foresaw all doom, Cassandra, shrank away from the palace in which Agamemnon and she were fated to die. With joyous words, the Queen welcomed her lord. Fair carpets were spread for his entry. We, like Cassandra, knew the inexorableness of the gods, and how heavy lay the curse on the house of Atreus; we knew, as Agamemnon passed through the royal door, that soon we should hear his death-cries. We

waited, appalled nearly as much as though we had been Greeks ourselves. We waited, while in the air swallows darted hither and thither, careless and impudent. One of them perched for an instant on the very stage where Cassandra gave her terror to the Elders. A stock-dove began to coo from one of the bushes—what did *it* care for the house of Atreus? And so the afternoon wore on, while we listened to the words of Æschylus, in such sunlight and to such an accompaniment of birds as they had in Hellas, in such a theatre as that for which the poet wrote them.

In the whole production there was little that struck me as being wrong. That the long-suffering watchman should first appear on the stage, and then run up the steps to look for the beacon, is rather unfortunate. But that is the fault of no one except the architect who built the Bradfield theatre without a διστεγία. On the other hand, there were one or two corrigible errors in the stage management. Agamemnon's sandals ought to be made in such a way that they can be taken off quickly, or else he ought to continue his speech while the slaves are taking them off. Last Tuesday, his entry into the palace lost much of its poignancy during the enormous interval spent by him in silence while his sandals were being removed, and by us in silent wonder whether they ever would come off. Another mistake occurred in the scene where Clytæmnestra is wheeled forth on the

eccyclema, standing over the bodies of her lord and his prophetess. The Queen steps down from the machine, and it is wheeled off, at the end of her first address to the Chorus. Thus the dialogue that follows loses all its dramatic force. It is all very well for Clytæmnestra to say

> "οὗτός ἐστιν Ἀγαμέμνων, ἐμὸς
> πόσις, νεκρὸς δέ, τῇσδε δεξιᾶς χερὸς
> ἔργον, δικαίας τέκτονος,"

but if Agamemnon is not there—not οὗτος, in fact—she cannot expect to make our flesh creep. Another objection which I have to offer is of a larger and more important kind. It is against the decision not to let the actors appear in masks. Why this decision was arrived at I really do not know. On the programme it is said that "all the essential features of a Greek Tragedy will be reproduced, except the masks and the high *cothurni*, which are considered unsuitable to the conditions of modern art." But the Greek language is, surely, no less unsuitable. "Modern art" has nothing to do with the case. The aim of the undertaking was, I imagine, to treat with thorough archæology an ancient work of art. Why stop short of any detail? Buskins may be too difficult for boys to walk gracefully in without years of practice, and I am quite ready to waive them. But to masks there is no practical objection. They were constructed by the Greeks in such a way that they rather

helped than impeded the wearer's utterance. Why, then, should not they have been reproduced at Bradfield? Even if they had not acted as sounding-boards (as which indeed, by reason of the boys' admirable elocution, they were not needed), they would have saved their wearers a great deal of self-consciousness. And they would have saved us our sense of the incongruity between wholesome, pleasant, public-schoolboy faces and the characters of Clytæmnestra, Agamemnon and Cassandra. Even Mr. (or Master) L. Harvey, who acted the part of Cassandra with so much real imagination and power, using his voice so skilfully and gesticulating always so appropriately, was quite unable to import into his features a trace of anything more fateful than a love of cricket and football. Given a κατάκομος, he would have been quite perfect. Even supposing the production had not been primarily archæological, and that, moreover, it had been acted by professional mimes with a command of facial expression, masks would have been better than no masks. For Æschylus' characters are not human beings, like those of his two successors. They are grandiose abstractions, terribly and wonderfully made—superb puppets destined to sin and suffer elementally. They are all "larger than life," and simpler. They are statuesque, static, invariable. In a play of Sophocles or Euripides, there might be something to say against masks; but, even then, not if the play were acted at

Bradfield, by boys. However, it is ungracious of me to be cavilling at anything in so good a performance, given under conditions so beautiful. It is long since I enjoyed a day so much as my day at Bradfield. I fancy, after all, that Dionysus himself would have enjoyed it. The sound of his old language (despite the strong English accent) would have been music to him, surely. And as for the altar—well! there might have been for him more sweetness than bitterness in its reminder that he was once a god.

PLAYS REPEATED

June 30, 1900.

THE war has kept a great fraction of the public away from the theatres. Plays, therefore, have had shorter runs than usual, and two or three productions have been necessary in playhouses for which, in time of peace, one production would have been quite enough. Well! the greater the number of new plays, the greater is likely to be our rate of progress in drama. If the war had multiplied that number, there would be a real addition to the blessings which we are supposed to have derived from it. But such is not the case. New productions are not necessarily of new plays, and, in point of fact, though there have never been more first nights than during the present season, there have never been so few new plays. Most of the managers, knowing that no play would have the chance of a long run, have discreetly and economically fallen back on "old favourites." If the gates of Thespis had closed automatically when those of Janus were opened, vital drama would have forfeited little or nothing, and dramatic critics would have been consoled for being thrown out of work by not having to live in agitated wonder as to what on earth they should say next.

I presume that Mr. William Archer has not, like the rest of us, been living in this state. He, as you know, holds it to be "an almost universal experience that our keenest theatrical enjoyments have come to us in seeing plays with which we were perfectly familiar, on the stage and off." As a playgoer, then (if not as a critic), he must have been having lately a high old time, and imagining that every one else was likewise blest. At the risk of saddening him, I suggest that the experience which he calls "almost universal" is a very rare experience, if it be not, indeed, actually confined to himself. *Our* "keenest theatrical enjoyments" (or, as I should prefer to say, the moments when we most greatly enjoy ourselves in theatres) are derived, surely, from plays whose power or beauty takes us by surprise. Mr. Archer contemns the element of surprise. "Curiosity and suspense," he says, "are not indispensable factors; if they were, no one would ever go to see a play a second time." Quite so; but it does not follow that when we see a play for the second time our enjoyment of it is not diminished by our knowledge of what is going to happen. Nor does Mr. Archer appreciate the element of "surprise" at its true value. The advantage of seeing a powerful or beautiful play for the first time is not merely that we do not know what is going to happen (or know only through reading the play in dim book-form). Plot and situation are not the only things which are glorified

by surprise. Character, idea, diction, affect us far more really when they are new to us than when they are familiar. True figures on the stage, revolving round a fine idea, expressing themselves beautifully—when we see them for the first time, are we not enraptured? We do not criticise. There is no self-consciousness in our pleasure, nor any express opinion that this or that point is fine. We do not admire the playwright's skill, nor the mimes'. We merely sit there, forgetting ourselves, full of nothing but illusion. We are spell-bound. We are "bowled over." And that, I insist, is the keenest, truest kind of æsthetic emotion to which we can attain—simply to be "bowled over." When next we go to see the play which has thus affected us, we have time to appreciate, to discriminate the details, to admire the whole work in conscious reference to our temperaments or our standards of taste. These active functions, they too are pleasant; but they are not comparable, surely, with that first passive pleasure which is forfeit. And the pleasure we take in the active functions is always marred somewhat by actual consciousness that we are not enjoying ourselves as we did the first time. Our anticipation having been so keen, there is always a measure of disappointment in the reality. We ask ourselves whether, after all, the thing is so wonderfully well done as we had thought it. We cast side-long glances at the friends whom we have brought with us, wondering whether they

are wondering at our recent rhapsodies. We pull ourselves together, fix our attention on the stage, and try to convince ourselves that we did not say a word too much. As often as not, we succeed in convincing ourselves. We may even recapture, here and there, some moments of unconscious delight; but usually, and at best, our second sight of a fine play brings but a detailed confirmation that it is a fine play. At our third sight of it, and ever after, we take its fineness rather as a matter of course, and our chief interest is centred in the performance: "are the mimes as good as they were on the first night?" or, in some cases, "is the play as well cast as it was when we first saw it?"

It is almost inevitable that, when we see an old play with a new cast, we should be disappointed in the performance. If a part has been finely created for us by one man or woman, we cannot bear that another man or woman should play it. We can hardly rid ourselves of our first sharp impression. Were "Pelléas and Mélisande" wholly recast, we should struggle desperately before we could be induced to admit that the new Melisande was nearly so good as Mrs. Patrick Campbell's, the new Pelleas as Mr. Martin Harvey's. Luckily, in the present matinées at the Royalty, Mrs. Campbell and Mr. Harvey are still playing their old parts. I watched them narrowly, and cannot report any deflection from that path of dim and delicate beauty which they first trod two years ago. But alas!

Mr. Forbes Robertson no longer is Golaud. Mr. Frank Mills is. Doubtless, if he had been Golaud two years ago, I should have had nothing but good to say of him. Even as it is, I can see that his performance is, strictly, more "in the picture" than was Mr. Robertson's. He is quieter, more monotonous—more Maeterlinckian, in fact. Yet I deplore and resent him. I cannot banish from my memory that other Golaud. Those wistful and poignant heart-cries cannot, for me, be rightly uttered but by Mr. Robertson himself. Even the uncouth violence of Mr. Robertson's performance was right, in a sense—for was not Golaud, too, "out of the picture"?

I hope that, when the war is quite finished, Mrs. Campbell will renew my emotion of two years ago by producing some other play of Maeterlinck. Can she resist the temptation to be Selysette, or Ygraine, or Alladine? London contains quite enough Maeterlinckians to make such ventures profitable to her as a manageress. The only fear is that she may be discouraged by the idiotic behaviour of people who, without sense of poetry, insist on going to see poetic plays. When I went this time to "Pelleas and Melisande" there were, as usual, enough of these people to make a widespread titter at various points in the play. The scene of the turret in the garden was, as usual, punctuated with laughter. I spent some time in wondering why. A girl leaning from a turret window, combing her

long hair, and, beneath, looking up to her, her lover —what *is* there funny in that? People don't do such things in real modern life, of course. And that is apparently the reason why to some people such things seem funny. It is not in the power of every one to adapt his mind to other conditions than those under which he lives. These asinine titterers are really no worse than the critics who solemnly brand as "unpleasant" the scene in which Golaud holds up his child to spy through Melisande's window. Indeed, they are better, inasmuch as they do not pretend to pass judgment on works of art. "Unpleasant"! Fancy a man treating a work of remote, symbolic art in the same spirit as that in which he would write a leaderette about yesterday's sensational divorce-case!

MELPOMENE AND MR. W. L. COURTNEY

July 7, 1900.

A GOOD criticism of a good criticism must wear always a rather ungracious air. It must be hostile; else it is useless, and were better dumb. In criticising the work of a creative artist whom he admires, a man may devote himself to reverent interpretation. Indeed, that is always the highest kind of criticism—to translate, through one's own temperament and intellect, the fine work of another man, to cast new lights on its beauties, to reveal things hidden in it, to illustrate and to extend its meanings. But this method would be absurd if it were applied by one man to the use already made of it by another. If the other man has interpreted well, obviously he needs no interpreter. His work is there, finally, for all men's profit; all one could do were to repeat it; which would be useless (æsthetically), and (morally) an infringement of copyright. If he has said all things well, his critic can but congratulate him and ever more hold his peace. But the chances are that he has said some things ill, for even the best critic is fallible. The only means of writing about him profitably is to search for these things, and—when found, strike a spark out

of. But to insist thus on the things which are said ill—that is, the things which, seeming to be mistaken, give the secondary critic a chance of expressing himself—is to risk an impression of not giving the primary critic due credit for the general goodness of his work. The secondary critic must, therefore, be very careful to preface his remarks with a generous, expansive congratulation to the provider of his subject. Let me not forget to do this to Mr. W. L. Courtney, whose "Idea of Tragedy" * I am taking for my theme. Let me, before I come to my one or two points of disagreement, hasten to say that this little book is full of erudition, sanity, acumen. True, its author is not one of the critics whom I most delight in, not one of those who startle me with new ideas, sometimes aweing me to silence with strange rightness, sometimes raising me to loud revolt. But he wields the old ideas in a way of his own. He has a temperament, a charming manner. His erudition is never dry. He does not, "pointer" in hand, mumble a pedantic discourse between us and an articulated skeleton of Melpomene. Rather, he drives round the town with that Muse, in an open carriage, as one has seen some courtly official drive round with some royal stranger from overseas. Though he bears himself with deference—with his back to the

* "The Idea of Tragedy," three lectures delivered at the Royal Institution by W. L. Courtney. London: Constable. 1900.

horses, as it were—he is quite at his ease with that living Muse, in whose kingdom he has himself travelled widely. And—the metaphor breaks here—he explains her to us as fluently and gracefully as Sir Rennell Rodd (for instance) would doubtless explain us to the Khedive. In fact, there is "a bloom on his scholarship." Admirable as are his analysis of the elements in all tragedy, and his comparison of the conditions which evoked tragedy in Greece and those which govern it in the modern world, he is never happier than when he is attacking the pedantic critics of an art in which, as in all arts, emotion is more than logic, or when he is flouting their futile efforts to measure this or that transcendent artist by rule of thumb. But, no matter what heads he break, he breaks them always urbanely, even playfully. He behaves always to the Oxford manner born. . . . Have I not paid as many of my handsome compliments as were needed? Let me proceed to business.

My first objection shall be made, not on a matter of opinion, but on one of manners. It seems to me that, in one instance, Mr. Courtney has carried his playfulness too far—indeed, quite beyond the bounds of good taste. I have no objection to his inclusion of Mr. Pinero's name in his syllabus. To begin with Æschylus, then to work through Sophocles and Euripides to Shakespeare, and from him to Maeterlinck and Ibsen, and to finish up with

Pinero, Mr., profound significance of—!—that, I admit, was a quite happy thought. To trumpet Mr. Pinero among the Immortals, in the rarefied air of the Royal Institution, without a smile—that was a well-deserved hit at the kind of illiterate folk who, having no standards of taste, shriek "masterpiece!" over anything that comes along. "Hereafter," said Mr. Courtney with a delicious air of gravity, "we shall know better, I think, than we do now how great an achievement Mr. Pinero's 'The Second Mrs. Tanqueray' is, how true a tragedy in form, management and style. *We stand too close to it at present to see its true proportions.*" The italics are mine—a necessary suggestion of the ironic emphasis with which Mr. Courtney, I am sure, made deadlier his shaft. Of course, no discerning person who heard the lecture or has read the book suspected Mr. Courtney of speaking here otherwise than through his hat. Perhaps, since undiscerning people have been known to slip even into the lecture-theatre of the Royal Institution, it would have been better to say outright that Mr. Pinero's masterpiece was (not is) no more than a brilliant *pastiche* of Ibsen, grafted on an ordinary commercial melodrama of coincidence, and that its author (for all his cleverness) has yet to betray one symptom of intellectual originality or sincerity. But, for the rest, irony is a keener weapon than denunciation, and I am glad that Mr. Courtney (in bidding us stand a few leagues further off, that we might the

better appreciate the majesty of the molehill's "true proportions") made so very swift and terrible a use of it. My objection is that he carried his cruelty too far, in allowing his publishers to invite Mr. Pinero to preface the printed lecture with an introduction. Perhaps it never struck him that Mr. Pinero would come solemnly up to the scratch. Yet that is, actually, what has happened. Actually, Mr. Pinero, as critic, has come forth to beat his drum round the gibbet whereon Mr. Pinero, as writer, hangs. "My dear Courtney" . . . "Your obliged friend, Arthur W. Pinero," and, between those two lines, a modest, heartfelt assurance that "when the scholar and thinker speaks of immortal poets, and of their development of an idea which has proved a source of noble inspiration to man through innumerable ages, the playwright of to-day, seeking illumination, must surely be among the humblest of his listeners"! Thus, and much more besides, with not a glimmer of perception that modesty, in such a case, is an impertinence, and that no gnat is expected to apologise for finding itself in a group of elephants, or to compliment the elephants on their size. Altogether the inclusion of this preface is a false note. It is too painful. Mr. Courtney should not have let his love of tragedy carry him so far.

Mr. Pinero relieves any possible monotony in his compliments to Æschylus and Shakespeare by

adopting an attitude of reserve towards Ibsen. "Scandinavia's greatest poet," he admits, "and one of the most potent dramatic influences of our day. [I would pay sixpence for a glimpse at Mr. Pinero's list of the others.] Yet . . . I felt grateful that the tragic idea had developed in a larger atmosphere than the smoking-room of a Norwegian hotel." I quote this regret, not for its intrinsic importance, but because it echoes from Mr. Courtney's lecture a passage to which I have a strong objection. Mr. Courtney, on the whole, is as acute as usual in his view of Ibsen, both as man and as artist in dramaturgy. In parenthesis, I may suggest, however, that he is wrong in thinking that "a self-satisfied idiot like Helmer" goes to prove that "mankind must seem very despicable to" Ibsen. Helmer is not an idiot at all. He is a very decent, very capable person. Ibsen shows no sign of hating or despising him. What he hates and despises is the social tradition and convention which has made the man an unsatisfactory husband of his wife. But this is by the way. The view against which I wish to protest especially is the view echoed by Mr. Pinero: that Ibsen's genius is parochial. Mr. Courtney hedges by saying that "perhaps the time has come when literature ought no longer to belong to the centre but to the circumference," but he leaves no doubt that his own private opinion is (like Aristotle's, which he quotes) that tragedy ought to deal with gods, kings, heroes.

But to quote Aristotle is no great support here. Aristotle lived long ago, and, meanwhile, evolution has been at work on tragedy as on everything else. When drama was still connected with religious worship, grandiose figures and noble backgrounds were obviously indispensable. But now that drama has, as Mr. Courtney elsewhere remarks, substituted a purely æsthetic for a religious aim, the tragic dramatist is at liberty to take whatever figures and backgrounds please him best. Mr. Courtney suggests that the tragic dramatist ought to be more pleased with "Glamys Castle, Melrose Abbey, Carisbrooke, or even with Carlton House Terrace" than with "a back parlour in South Hampstead." Why? Because they are more of "the centre," says Mr. Courtney. But are they? Surely, the test of a tragic dramatist's centrality is whether he has penetrated into the permanent, elemental passions of humanity, rather than whether he has penetrated into the places where the "*vie quotidienne*" is most "*auguste.*" The modern development of drama has been all towards realism. Dramatists have been trying to discover whether they can get from the common materials around them motives for lasting, universal art. This is what Ibsen has been trying to discover, and of his success one need ask no better proof than Mr. Courtney's identification of Dr. Stockmann with Prometheus. Out of the petty politics of a parish, Ibsen obtained a motive identical with that which

Æschylus obtained from Attic mythology. Had he made Stockmann a King of Norway and Sweden, instead of a provincial doctor, what should we have gained? If Aubrey Tanqueray had been made a Duke, would the play in which he figured have been any nearer than it was to "the centre"—less parochial, in the true sense of the word? If the stories in the "Family Herald" had a back-parlour in Hampstead for their background, instead of Glamys Castle and Carlton House Terrace, would Mr. Courtney read them, every week, with less avidity?

Another mistake which Mr. Courtney makes is in attaching too much importance to the fact that tragedy originated from the people. He constantly speaks of tragedy "belonging" to the people. As a matter of fact, even at Athens, where it was a religious ceremony, it appealed so little to the people that (as Mr. Courtney elsewhere remarks) the people had to be lured to it by the performance of "a satyric drama, which was a piece of buffoonery, like the farce which so often forms the afterpiece of a theatrical performance in the provinces." Tragedy belonged rather to the dramatists who invented and developed it as an art-form. It died away when those dramatists ceased to exist. There had never been any real, æsthetic demand for it. Nor can I dare to hope, with Mr. Courtney, that the present war in South Africa, and the national excitement caused by it, is likely to produce such

a demand in the English people during the twentieth century. There is no doubt that the great movements in art have always arisen after some crisis in national life—in other words, that great artists are apt to be born when great deeds are being done. But it is not every big war that has this desirable effect. There is no true analogy between our present war and the Greek struggle against the Persians, or our own struggle against the Spaniards or Napoleon. Says Mr. Courtney, "are we not living at present under a wave of indignant emotion, which is sweeping away class distinctions, destroying the false notion that wealth is a form of nobility, bringing down the rough estimate of things to the bare human level, the qualities which make a virile and efficient man?" No; frankly, we are not. We are engaged in no struggle for national existence. So incomparably stronger are we than our enemy that our emotion in subduing him can (in comparison with the emotion we should have felt over the Armada) be little stronger than that of a magistrate who sends a juvenile offender to a reformatory. The war was a necessary incident in our imperial policy. At one time, it seemed as though it might be a very complicated incident. But the end of it was never for one moment in any real doubt. We knew that England and the Empire would come out all right in the end—that we should, at worst, "muddle through." And that is not the spirit which produces in the next genera-

tion great works of art. Moreover, the conditions of modern life are such that this spirit could hardly arise even in a real national crisis. In former times, wars were much longer than they can be now, and the two nations at war lived in a state of vague, exalted suspense. News came to each slowly, little by little. Now, however, there are cables, and special correspondents, and halfpenny newspapers. These things intensify the emotions of the nation no doubt, but they intensify them by means of congestion. The excitement is tremendous, but it is soon over. Nature works slowly, and is not likely to produce children of exceptional genius in circumstances so pressing. Already, the nation is but languidly interested in the South African war. Its eyes are turned towards China. When the Chinese difficulty is settled, there will be some other difficulty to settle. And this reminds me that there is no instance of a great empire producing great movements in art. "With the Assyrian, Chinese, Persian, Roman, and British Empires," says Mr. George Moore in an admirable essay, "contrast Egypt, Greece, the Italian States, Venice, Holland, and the English island." The energy of a nation which runs an Empire is concentrated on imperial affairs. It has no time for great art. Mr. Courtney must make up his mind to accept this fact. After all, though we cannot expect a regeneration of great drama, there is no reason why our drama, such as it is, should not

continue to improve. Mr. Courtney will find solace in that likelihood, I am sure, even though our drama travel, as it will, further and further from Carlton House Terrace into the backwoods of Hampstead.

"LAST ACTS"

July 14, 1900.

It is remarkable how many modern plays are ruined by their conclusions. It so often happens that all goes well to the end of the penultimate act. The development has been natural, and the culmination is really moving, or exciting, or interesting. Then comes the last act, and very soon after the rise of the curtain our fingers flutter to our watches, even to our hats. Why is this? The dramatic critics, next morning, will declare in chorus that "after the thrilling *dénouement* which brings down the curtain on the third act, the remainder of the play was necessarily something of an anti-climax." Their ideal in construction is a play where the excitement is kept up to the final fall of the curtain. They want the curtain to fall with a "bang!" and the audience to leave the theatre as excitedly as though it were being shot from the mouth of a cannon. If that does not happen, they cry "anti-climax," and believe that they have explained what was the matter with the last act. Foolish fellows! Every play should end in an anti-climax; and there are few cases in which that anti-climax ought not to have a whole last act devoted to it.

"LAST ACTS"

I dare say that the best modern dramatists would, if they were appealed to, endorse the critics' disparagement of anti-climax. The truly creative artist never knows how things ought to be done in his art. He has no theories, and is always quite ready to accept such theories as may be dinned into his ears. Fortunately, he does not act on those theories. He acts by instinct, and instinct guides him in the right path. It is for the sake of the dramatists who, not having the divine flame, are apt to trim their work to the fallacious standards of the moment and so to make it even less good than it might otherwise be, that I am going to drop a few hints on the subject of anti-climax—a few hints, some of which Professor Lewis Campbell, in his turn, has (accidentally) dropped to me, from the current number of the "Fortnightly." Certain modern critics have sought to reconcile their reverence for the Greek and Elizabethan dramatists with their knowledge that final anti-climax occurred invariably in Greek and Elizabethan drama by a theory that anti-climax was used simply because there was no curtain to the stage. Obviously (they argue) these plays could not end on a poignant climax unless a quick veil were drawn between the stage and the audience; for instance, the last words in a play could not be the last of the dying hero, when the hero immediately after his last gasp, would have to get up and make his exit in full view of the audience; and, therefore, some

kind of internal anti-climax—in a Greek play, a chorus; in an Elizabethan play, a subordinate character—had to be foisted in. Professor Campbell, quite rightly, believes that the "exodus" of the Greek chorus and the entry of (say) Fortinbras were not mere makeshifts, as these modern critics imagine, but were inherent in the right æsthetic effect. He quotes Cicero's "De Oratore," in support of his theory. Why, by the way, will no professor ever rely on himself? Cicero was a man whose word no one would take, even in his lifetime. How much less weight can it carry now! Professor Campbell, on the other hand, is one whose opinion would carry considerable weight. How much better had he given it to us untainted! —had he said, simply, the things which now I must say for him.

No drama is rightly wrought unless it decline from its culminating point gradually to its close, even as gradually it rose to that point from its outset. A drama should be like the well-rounded life of a human creature; it should end in as low a key as that in which it began. To end it in an outburst would be as great an error as to begin it in an outburst. A drama must descend as surely it ascended, and we who follow it must be left on the same level as that from which we started—on the same level, though (of course) on the other side of the hill. Despite the dubious formula "*in medias res.*" no one has ever argued that a work of art

ought to begin on a high key. That formula is interpreted, rightly, as meaning "waste no time over irrelevant preliminaries; don't palter; come straight to your material." No one takes it to mean "come straight to the extreme use you are going to make of that material." There are two reasons for this. One is that the reader of a book or the seer of a play requires time before he can be lifted out of the common atmosphere of his own life; the process must be a kind of gradual wooing. The other is that he cannot be made to feel acutely about things which have not been explained to him, and that a crisis of any kind would be wasted on him until he were prepared for it. Thus, though a novelist may begin with "You brute!" he is obliged to add immediately "The speaker— a girl with flashing eyes, was standing," &c., &c., and then enter into an account of what led up to the scene before he can proceed further. Then he will repeat the words "You brute!" The scene will begin as though they had not been written before. As in literature and drama, so in other arts. In music the analogy is obvious. In painting it is not so obvious, because the effect made by a picture is not so definitely progressive an effect. But the analogy is there, too. The painter works up from low tones to high, and, though at first sight it is the high tones that catch our eyes, we do, thereafter, in examining the picture for our pleasure, start unconsciously from the low tones. It occurs

to me that perhaps we don't, and that I am out of my depth. No matter; the analogy of painting is not essential to my case. I have shown clearly enough why no play ought to begin in a high key. As no one ever supposed that a play ought to do so, my reasons may have seemed superfluous. I gave them merely because they will explain equally why a play ought not to end on a high note, and will thus confute the anti-anti-climax party. Even as the dramatist has to raise us gradually from ordinary life, so is it his duty to conduct us safely back into ordinary life, to take leave of us with a bow. He must no more dash us down than he must wrench us up; else we shall have no æsthetic pleasure—shall merely be stunned. At both ends his work must put forth tendrils on the common earth. The entry of Fortinbras spans the gulf between Hamlet and reality. It sends us away with our illusion unhurt. It brings the play, moreover, into relation with the mimic world which is its background: Hamlet is dead, but he was only one of many men in that world; his destiny was one of many destinies to be yet fulfilled. It soothes us, and makes more impressive what has gone before, even as does the Old Testament's invariable formula after some kingly tragedy—"and ——, his son, reigned in his stead;" even as do Æneas' words, "Cessi, et sublato montem genitore petivi," after the burning of his city. That is what the entry of Fortinbras does for us. That irrelevance is really

an inherent part of the play's art. Accursed be that manager who removes it from his acting-edition!

Thus the first reason I gave for ascent in plays holds good for descent. So does the second reason. Even as you cannot be really excited about matters not yet explained to you, you cannot to the full appreciate the pinnacle in a play unless you are given time to think about it—to look back at it. The pinnacle in "Hamlet" is the Prince's death, and it is Fortinbras who gives you time to mourn over him. But where the highest point in a play is not a death, but some great situation, portending great consequences, anti-climax is not merely desirable, but necessary. You must know what the consequences are, what the solution, how the knot is to be unravelled. In fact, you must have anti-climax. In most of the serious modern plays the highest point is a situation of this kind—a catastrophe to be made the best of. And this scene comes usually at the end of the third act. Thus the fourth act must be one long anti-climax. So much the better, as I have suggested. The reason why the fourth act so often spoils a play is, not that it contains an anti-climax, but that the anti-climax contained in it is clumsily or improbably worked out by the author. Sometimes, the trouble is that the author, though he can invent an exciting situation, does not know enough of human nature to know what effect it would have on the human

beings involved in it. Sometimes the trouble is that the situation itself (though it seemed, at the time, dramatically possible) was actually impossible, and that its consequences are seen by us, in cold blood, to be impossible accordingly. Most often the trouble is that the author, having made a situation that logically demands an unhappy ending, employs a cowardly and futile energy in the up-faking of a happy one. (A skip over twenty years into Christmas Eve used to be the favourite method. Less naïf methods are in vogue nowadays, but they are no more really effective.)

In future, let the critics not shake their heads over the thought of an anti-climax. Let them remember that if an anti-climax is tedious the fault is not its own, but the dramatist's.

MR. JONES BELOW STAIRS

October 6, 1900.

Some time ago I suggested that the dramatist's horizon might be extended beyond the drawing-rooms of the upper and upper-middle classes. I hinted that the lower class really did exist, and might be translated into serious dramatic art. And I hinted (fearing that such a transition might be too sudden, too staggering, for a gentleman who had envisaged nothing but what is visible on the first-floors of Mayfair or Bayswater) that the dramatist might break his fall by dallying with that peculiar race which hangs half-way between the lower and the higher class—the race of servants. Hitherto, the dramatist had been content to use servants merely as a means of unfolding the past of their betters at the beginning of the first act, after which they were allowed to subside into fitful and bald announcements that dinner was served or the carriage waiting. Once or twice, indeed, a kitchen had been made the main scene of a play; but then it had been treated only in a spirit of broad, coarse farce, in the spirit of the "Yellow-plush Papers." Thackeray had atoned for that dreary *jeu d'esprit* by his creation of Major Pendennis' valet; other novelists, since Thackeray's time, had concerned

themselves seriously and objectively with servants. But the dramatists, as their wont is, had been blind to the possibility of keeping pace with novelists. "Jeames" and "Sary Hann," "lawks" and "leastways," were for them the insuperable boundaries to what might be done with servants. They perceived not that the anomalous life led by servants cried aloud for serious comedic treatment. So I threw my hint out to them. I never supposed that they would take it. I should like to suppose that in "The Lackey's Carnival," at the Duke of York's Theatre, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones has fulfilled for me my touching ambition to shape the history of the modern stage by taking the hint which I threw out. Alas! I have gone into the matter, and have discovered that his play was in Mr. Frohman's hands a few weeks before the hint was thrown out. I may, however, solace myself with the knowledge that my mind converged unconsciously with the mind of him who is always, in alertness and intelligence and sense for life, a league or so in advance of the ordinary dramatists. There is, also, this glad thought for me: that the ordinary dramatists, impervious to a critic's precept, will probably be fired by the example of Mr. Jones. We shall have, at length, serious comedies about servants. And that, after all, was the finer part of my ambition.

"The Lackey's Carnival" is a play with many technical faults. All these faults have been

unctuously exposed by the critics; for the critics are ever eager to avenge themselves on a dramatist who gives them anything to think about; and Mr. Jones, therefore, even at his technically best, seldom gets a good word from the fraternity. The good word deserved by "The Lackey's Carnival" is, as I have suggested, that here is the first effort made by a dramatist to penetrate the character of servants. Having said this good word as loudly as I can, I feel that I may, decently, proceed to pick holes. I may, in the first place, express my regret that Mr. Jones has not devoted his whole play to his main effort. Instead of dealing solely with servants, and using masters and mistresses only in so far as servants are by masters and mistresses inevitably affected, Mr. Jones has made the affairs of his drawing-room as prominent as those of his kitchen. More prominent, indeed; for the servants are (dramatically) important only in so far as they affect the destinies of their masters and mistresses. This is a pity. These servants, seen for the first time on the stage, are infinitely more interesting than their employers, seen from time immemorial, and overshadow them, and prevent us from caring what befall them. Conversely, the uninteresting employers prevent us from seeing so much as we should like to see of the servants: they waste much of the time which ought to be spent by us in studying the servants alone. Even if Mr. Jones had taken as much trouble with his

employers and made them as real as his servants, I should still object to the portmanteau form, on the ground that our inexperience of servants on the stage demands for them exclusive attention. But Mr. Jones has not done this. He has breathed no life into the employers; he has been content that they should be the familiar, old-fashioned figures of insanely jealous husband, innocent (but on one occasion indiscreet) wife, eminent Q.C., who is an old friend of the husband and tries to set everything right, &c. &c. They have no value, these figures, save for the stale purposes of dramatic intrigue. The servants, on the other hand, have a very real value. They are human beings—human beings of a new kind. They have characters. In fact, the two sides of the portmanteau do not meet. Mr. Jones' delight in depicting the servile character interferes with his conduct of the intrigue, and the intrigue mars the accuracy of his portrayal of the character itself. The whole of the third act is devoted to a ball given by a valet to his fellow-servants in his employers' absence. But this ball, interesting in point of character, merely retards the intrigue. Nothing comes of it. The valet (blackmailer of the wife) is reduced to harmlessness by two circumstances which have nothing whatever to do with the giving of the ball. When, finally, he is led off to prison and silence, one feels that for the purpose of the intrigue it would have been much better and simpler to make him an ordinary villain

of the drawing-room. Mr. Jones, in order to get a link between the drawing-room and the kitchen, has made him a kind of dual creature who, in the interval between his past and present "situation," has been palming himself off on society as a gentleman at large. And thus Mr. Jones has come within an ace of ruining the best of all the characters in the play. It is, of course, possible that a valet might, as in this play, be so clever and so well graced as to have got into a good club and made a well-bred woman flirt with him. But such a man, surely, would never have gone back to his old life. Found out by his new associates, he would hardly have sunk below the level of a flash adventurer. Even if he had, it would not have amused him to give a dance to his fellow-servants. He would, as does Thomas Tarboy, dine quietly at the Savoy when he got the chance; but he would not, like Thomas Tarboy, arrange an orgy for the simple folk whom he despised all the more bitterly because he was one of them by accident of birth. If Mr. Jones' dramatic scheme made it necessary that the valet should be a blackmailer, the valet's blackmail ought to have been levied on account of indiscretions committed by a lady not for his sake but for the sake of some man in her own class. Thomas Tarboy's out-of-class exploits may be possible in real life. But they are, at least, so rare as to be not typical. They smack of romantic fantasy. They mar what would otherwise have been a con-

sistently realistic character, and they make improbable that servants' ball which might otherwise have seemed inevitable.

Stripped of the circumstantial unreality in which Mr. Jones has clad him, Thomas Tarboy is a fine and memorable creation—a study of the moral derangement and the pathetic aspirations which are produced by the conditions of domestic service in modern times. In all times, of course, domestic service has been a demoralising state of existence. To belong to one class and to live in close contact with another, to "live hardly" in contemplation of more or less luxury and idleness, to dissimulate all your natural feelings because you are forbidden to have them, and to simulate other feelings because they are expected of you—this has always been an unnatural life, breeding always the same bad qualities. The instinct to spy, to flatter, to peculate were common among the slaves in Plautus' time, as among the servants in our own time. But the Plautian slaves—the slaves, indeed, and the servants in all times but ours—were fairly content with their wretched lot; though they were eager to improve it by snatching little surreptitious comforts, it never occurred to them that they deserved a better lot. They envied their employers, but they never realised that they might themselves (but for an accident) be leading a delightful life. They felt themselves to be of a caste lower than that of their employers. They felt themselves brutish,

ignorant, good for nothing but to serve. Plato somewhere suggests that, if a rich man were by some god rapt away into a wilderness with his retinue of slaves, his orders would be ignored, and he would be reduced to fawning on those over whom the social system had enabled him to tyrannise, and to making all kinds of concessions, sorely against his will. But Plato reckoned without the servile tradition. The Greek slaves would have been as docile in the wilderness as in Athens. They never had been educated. We, during the last thirty years, have been smiling over the blessings of universal education, and we are just beginning to realise, with horror, that we ought to have postponed that system until all menial duties could be performed by machinery. We are beginning to find that the only servants who are willing to perform those duties well are they who will soon be past their work. The younger generation of servants is almost as learned and as graceful as are we ourselves. It asks itself, "Why should we be treated as though we were dogs?" It begins to claim privileges—privileges that cannot be granted without upsetting the household. What are we to do? There is nothing to do but to rescind the Compulsory Education Acts, and to look forward to being served well in twenty years or so. Meanwhile, we suffer. The servants themselves suffer. They are seething for rebellion; yet they know well that, though they are too good to be

servants, they are not quite good enough to be anything else. They must perforce continue to serve, and content themselves with serving as badly as they can without actually losing their means of livelihood. They hate us for the advantage we still have over them, and they try to be even with us in secret. Their aspirations are pathetic, as I have said. We, who are to blame in the matter, may at least acknowledge the pathos. But we cannot help seeing that these aspirations are bad for the character, and that they involve an amount of hypocrisy far greater than that which vitiated servants in other ages of the world. In projecting Thomas Tarboy Mr. Jones has brought upon the stage something that is (despite excrescences) as true essentially as it is new. What is painful in life is, if it be realised, delightful in art. Therefore I thank Mr. Jones. But I hope that he will soon write a play in which *all* the chief characters shall be servants.

"ALICE" AGAIN AWAKENED

December 22, 1900.

I CONCEIVE the illustrator of books as an active fiend, who clips with long sharp shears the tender wings of illusion. I hate him. Especially do I hate him when he illustrates a work of fantasy. It is bad enough to be robbed of my own vision of a realistic scene, even when the illustrator's vision happens, by some rare chance, to strike me as better than my own. It is far worse to see materialised a scene of sheer fantasy, even if, by another rare chance, the illustrator's vision of it has coincided with my own. But, though I deplore all illustrations, I do discriminate. Though I should prefer that "Alice in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking-Glass" had never been illustrated at all, by Sir John Tenniel or any other artist, I do admit readily that Sir John's illustrations are the best imaginable. I rejoice in the goodness of them, if only because they are so good, so sure, that they have permanently benumbed the hundred-and-one hands which would otherwise have been itching to illustrate "Alice." It is a good thing, also, that there never was an edition of "Alice" unillustrated. We have never read the book save under Sir John's auspices. He, mercifully, clipped our wings before

they had fluttered ever so little, and so his ingenious flying-machine has never really chafed us. The true fiend of illustration suffers us to soar alone ere he swoops with his shears. We ought, also, to thank Sir John for this mercy : that he has so paved the way that the inevitable dramatic version of "Alice" need not be painful to us. Imagine what would have happened if "Alice" had never been illustrated at all, or had been illustrated badly by various ladies and gentlemen! However well-inspired the conceiver and the costumier of the play, how we should have shuddered! As it is, we have but one common vision of all the characters and monsters whom Alice met—Sir John's vision. And we are perfectly content if these characters and monsters realise that vision. In the present production at the Vaudeville Theatre, they do realise it, obediently and fully. One and all, they are as we know them in the book. Poor Alice herself is the sole disturber of our preconception. That Alice's appearance should be wrong is a very serious pity ; but it is not the fault of the management, nor of Miss Ellaline Terriss, altogether. A child could not play so long and important a part. No actress (to adapt a well-known aphorism) can play Alice till she is twenty, and then she doesn't look the part. She may produce an illusion of childishness, but she cannot give us the prim, Medio-Victorian childishness of Alice. The short petticoats of Alice, and the straight-combed hair,

are not quite possible. Their severity has to be sacrificed. Some measure of alien softness and picturesqueness has to be contrived; else were the result a monstrous caricature. But I cannot help thinking that Miss Terriss, in her necessary desire to translate 'twenties into 'teens, has gone further than she need have gone in the matter of softness and picturesqueness, further than she need have gone from very Alice. Her curls need not fall in quite so wilful a tumult; nor need her dress be silken, with accordion-pleats; nor need her pinafore seem quite so costly a symbolic film. Her whole appearance is a defiance, rather than a compromise. However, for the others, I have nothing but praise to offer. The Mad Hatter and the Knave of Hearts, the Mock Turtle and the Duchess, and all the other creatures, are precisely as Sir John gave them to us, only with the added graces of colour, mobility, voices, and three dimensions. These added graces would, of course, be mere aggravations, were not Sir John's forms copied faithfully, or had not these forms existed at all. Wherefore, once and away, I may be entirely grateful to an illustrator. I beg leave to withdraw my wish that "Alice" had never been illustrated at all.

Often as this dramatic version has been performed, I had never seen it before. Its ingenuity is delightful. Lewis Carrol was not less fortunate in having Mr. Savile Clark as his dramatist than in

having Sir John as his illustrator. None of the most delightful incidents in either of the two books has been omitted, and none of them has lost its savour, and all of them grow out of and into one another in the right kind of reasonably-unreasonable sequence. The result is a perfect little pantomime. Every adult must revel in it. I cannot so safely answer for children. Between us and children—even the least "reserved" children—there is always a certain veil of mystery. It is not safe to dogmatise about their tastes by reference to what *we* should have liked at their age; for children are probably as different as are adults in different generations. The punning of which Lewis Carrol was too prodigal, and which delighted us as children, may, for aught I know, bore children nowadays as greatly as it bores us. Their ringing peals may be a mere affectation. Again, do they, I wonder, really share our delight in Carrol's philosophic *aperçus*? We laugh long when some one, to whom Alice has declared that she likes the Carpenter better than the Walrus "because *he* was just a little bit sorry for the poor oysters," replies "Yes, but he ate more of them;" we find in that reply a more deliciously just indictment of sentimentalism than ever was made, even by Mr. Meredith. The children laugh, too; but their laughter may be hollow mimicry of ours. Through the veil of mystery, we can but make wild shots at their true tastes. My own personal shot is that

they do really like "Alice," as a story, by reason of its perfect blend of fantasy with moral edification. I believe the love of these two separate things to be implanted in the child for all time, and I believe that Carrol's inimitable conjunction of them keeps, and will keep, "Alice" really popular in nurseries. Behind Lewis Carrol, the weaver of fantastic dreams, the delighter in little children, there was always Mr. Dodgson, the ascetic clergyman, the devoted scholar in mathematics. And the former had to pay constant toll to the latter—to report himself, as it were, at very brief intervals. It was as though the writer never could quite approve of his deviations into the sunny path that he loved best. When he was not infusing mathematics into his humour, he was stiffening out his fantasy with edification. In his later books, mathematics and morals triumphed. Humour lay crushed in "The Tangled Skein," fantasy in "Sylvie and Bruno." Readers of Walter Pater will remember the story of Prior Saint-Jean; will remember how the last volume of that treatise on mathematics which had occupied his life never was completed. "Whereas in the earlier volumes you found by way of illustration no more than the simplest indispensable diagrams, the scribe's hand had strayed here into mazy borders, long spaces of hieroglyph, and as it were veritable pictures of the theoretic elements of his subject. Soft wintry auroras seemed to play behind whole pages of crabbed textual writing, line and figure

bending, breathing, flaming into lovely 'arrangements' that were like music made visible. . . ." Well! (as Pater himself would have said) Lewis Carrol's history was the history of Prior Saint-Jean reversed. In him the fair luxuriance of a Pagan fancy was gradually overcome by the sense of duty to his cloth, and by the tyranny of an exact science. In the two books about Alice, however, you have a perfect fusion of the two opposing elements in his nature. In them the morality is no more than implicit, and the mathematics are not thrust on you. Though modern adults are apt to resent even implicit morality in a book for children, children delight in it. They delight in feeling that, in some way or other, Alice is being "improved" by her adventures. Orally, she seems to be an awful prig, but various internal evidence makes them suspect her of having "a past"—of having been naughty; and they feel that, somehow or other, the Caterpillar and the Red Queen and all the rest of them are working out her redemption. This human, commonplace element in Alice, and the delight depending on it, are, I think, missed in the production at the Vaudeville. Not merely does Miss Terriss look more like a fairy than a child: she *behaves* as such. She gives no hint of "a past" behind a priggish manner. She seems as one born to patronise, from a pedestal of solid virtue, Red Queens and White Queens and other potentates. For her no monster, how grotesque soever, has any

terrors; she is secure, with the security that comes of a conscience utterly untroubled. Nor can she from any sage beast acquire any knowledge that is not hers already. To every one alike, she is all smiles, and sweet superiority, and honeyed graciousness. She is not merely a fairy: she is the fairy-queen. This is a pity. It robs the play of what would be, as I conceive, its primary appeal to children. It does not, however, mar very grievously the enjoyment of adults. And is it not for us adults, after all, that these pantomimes are intended?

THE VESTURE OF MIMES

January 12, 1901.

In its "palmy" days our drama suffered by the too shabby aspect of its mimes. Now it suffers by the overpowering "dressiness" of them. When it lay under the purple dominancy of Bulwer and Bulwer's apes, the costumiers ought to have had *carte blanche*. Those reams of rhetoric, emitted by Emperors, Cardinals and Troubadours, needed as much of satin and velvet, ermine and silver-gilt, as of lung-power and florid articulation and lack of humour. Buckram and dingily-painted cardboard, darned hose and cloaks of napless velveteen, must have been very palpable drawbacks; but they were, for pecuniary reasons, inevitable. Those pecuniary reasons are no more. The nation has been prospering, and the price for playgoing has been raised. Managers of theatres have so much money passing through their fingers that they can afford displays of expensive costumes. The public, moreover, has learnt to expect these displays, to resent any lack of them. Well! if our drama were still wallowing in rhetorical romance, this state of things would be most beneficial. But our drama left Bulwer and Bulwer's apes long ago in the lurch. Except Mr. Stephen Phillips, all the current dramatists who

matter a jot are devoting themselves to realistic comedy of modern life. To produce "Herod" properly, no expenditure of money for costumes (with proportionate expenditure of taste) would have been too great. The theme and tone of the play demand gorgeous display. Nor, from the artistic standpoint, can too much money be spent on any of Shakespeare's plays. But Shakespeare, though he is produced often, has nothing to do with the drama that we are trying to create—the drama that really matters to us. He has, doubtless, influenced Mr. Stephen Phillips; but there is no likelihood that Mr. Phillips, in his turn, will influence any one. He is walking alone through a remote wood from whose branches no apes dangle. Modern realism is the one thing that has vitality, present and future vitality. The dramatist's aim being to produce an illusion of contemporary life, it is important that the mimes be clothed like the real men and women whom one sees otherwise than across footlights. But, as a rule, they are not so clothed. They look too brand-new, too glossy, too expensive. They, and the managers who rule them, have not yet grasped that ideal which I have just suggested—the ideal of verisimilitude. They are still aiming at the ideal of gorgeous effect, though it is now quite incongruous with the scheme of the dramatist. What the producers of Bulwer ought to have done, but could not do, these others succeed in doing, without having any business to do it.

"But," you might murmur, "*is* gorgeous effect quite incongruous with the scheme of the dramatist? Doesn't he, almost invariably, disdain to deal with any class but the upper or the upmost upper middle, neither of which looks anything if not gorgeous?" I admit that the dramatist is, at present, very haughty. He is very shy of the suspicion that he knows anything about any one unworthy of a "social par." The kind of people used by him as subjects for his art are (with few lapses) people who spend a great deal of money at their dressmakers' or tailors'. Accordingly, it is well that the finances of the modern theatre enable the mimes to be dressed at great expense. In the afternoon, when they are driving, and in the evening, when they are dining, the upper and upmost upper-middle classes do look very gorgeous, no doubt. But it is not true that they always look gorgeous. If you are early a-foot in any modish thoroughfare of London, you will see ladies whose lives are spent in a whirl of "social pars" walking about in garb which (though, doubtless, worth a king's ransom) is quite simple, quite sober, quite unobtrusive. Do you, on the other hand, remember the confections of those ladies in the third act (time: very early morning) of "The Liars"? And they, those rainbows of silk, twinkling firmaments of jewellery, fleecy clouds of lace, were no rare phenomena on the stage. They were familiar and typical instances. It matters not what time of

day be fixed by the dramatist, nor whether the scene be laid in London or in the country, all the actresses impersonating smart women on the English stage are dressed up to the nines, and as far as possible above that level. In "The Liars" I remember there was a typical instance of their disregard for place as well as for time. The second act of the play passed in a riverside hotel, where two or three ladies appeared, having just stepped out of canoes or punts. They, again, were dressed as for some elaborate urban function—were rainbows, firmaments, clouds, and all the rest of it. A frequenter of the river has told me that, last summer, most of the women actually did navigate in this kind of attire. But they certainly had not done so before the production of "The Liars." It is the business of mimes in a realistic play to mirror, not to set, fashions. In romantic plays, the fashion-setting business would be well enough. But in realistic plays it is as great a solecism as would be the pronunciation of leisure as *leesure*, or homage as *'omage*. Romance being "off," mimes no longer pose as authorities on the pronunciation of words: they try to speak like us. Why do not they dress, also, like the real people whom they are there to represent?

It is some salve to our national pride to reflect that the convention of inappropriate gorgeousness is not confined to the English stage. Even Duse, reputed to be the most realistic of living actresses,

is a slave to it. In "La Gioconda," last year, at the Lyceum, she impersonated the wife of a sculptor—a woman living in the country, rapt in the love of her husband and her child, caring nothing at all for the world, looking down on the world from a pinnacle of noble dowdiness. How was she dressed? Exactly after the fashion of her Mrs. Tanqueray, or her Magda, or her Princesse Georges. I confess that I was surprised. I should have wondered less if she had come upon the stage wearing the coat and hat which she had worn on the way from her hotel to the theatre: such a proceeding would have been but a corollary to her refusal to annul the effect of footlights by putting paint or powder on her face; it would have been but another piece of false realism. Indeed, seeing that she never made up her face even for the part of a radiant woman of fashion, I was always surprised that she should go out of her way to change her clothes for it. That she should go out of her way to dress up gorgeously in "La Gioconda" was a fact which could be explained on no hypothesis but that she loved fine clothes for their own sake and was anxious to show them off. If Duse, the austerely transcendental, has this little weakness, we cannot very well blame our own (comparatively trivial) actresses for having it too. But why do not the dramatists whom they interpret prevent them from yielding to the little weakness on inappropriate occasions? Or why do not the male

critics cancel the gushing encouragement given to the over-dressed actress by those female critics who are sent to first-nights to describe the millinery? Why do not the male critics make a point of always telling the over-dressed actress how absurd she looks?

"Artistically," you murmur, "that is all very well. But the theatre is a commercial undertaking. Much of the success of such plays as 'The Liars' is due to the public's desire to go and see pretty women gorgeously dressed. In London no young actress can be brought to the footlights unless she is pretty. The public does not want to see plain actresses, however great may be their talent. And it wants to see them tricked out in such a way as makes them most strikingly attractive." Again I meet you half way. I am quite prepared to look at the matter from a commercial standpoint. I admit the lamentable fact that our public likes its mimes (male and female) to be selected for the shape of their figures and faces rather than for the quality of their brains, and that the managers must reckon with this preference. Handsome actors do much to attract into the theatre the female section of the public. Handsome actresses do much to attract the male section. I have no doubt that the female section likes the actresses to be overdressed, even as the male section, possibly, likes the actors to be overdressed. But that consideration is not important. It is, primarily, the male section which goes

to see the actresses, and whose tastes have to be catered for in that connexion. And it is an utter fallacy to suppose that men's admiration of a woman is spurred by gorgeous frocks and jewels. On the contrary, these accessories are obstacles to admiration. "'A cloud of millinery,'" said Lord Palmet, in "Beauchamp's Career," "'shoots me off a mile from a woman. In my opinion witches are the only ones for wearing jewels without chilling the feminine air about them. Fellows think differently.' He waved a hand expressive of amiable toleration, for this question upon the most important topic of human affairs was deep, and no judgment should be hasty in settling it. 'I'm peculiar,' he resumed. 'A rose and a string of pearls: a woman who goes beyond that's in danger of petrifying herself and her fellow man.'" But Lord Palmet was not really "peculiar." Expressing (quite palpably) the views of his creator, he was expressing also the views of mankind in general. Women dress elaborately to please themselves, to please or displease other women. If they imagine that they please men by their elaboration they make a very great mistake. But probably they imagine no such thing. It is significant that in this age, as in all other ages of the world, she whose especial mission is to attract some man, the young unmarried girl, is by her mother shown with the least possible amount of ornamentation—no jewels, no furbelows. Furbelows are but an obscuring cloud,

even as jewels, in Mr. Meredith's witty phrase, petrify. It is only the simplest kind of frocks that really give beauty its fair scope. And thus, accepting the idea of the playgoing public as Pasha, I find one reason the more against the prevailing "dressiness" of female mimes.

I do not know enough about the psychology of women to assert that they, in their turn, are chilled and disconcerted by the "dressiness" of male mimes. So I will base on merely artistic grounds my plea that actors should not wear patent-leather boots (or boots of brightest yellow) with tweed suits, and that they should never snatch an opportunity of displaying the latest vulgarity and monstrosity in the fashion of waistcoats. On the whole, however, the actor is less culpable than the actress in the matter of gorgeousness. The cut and colour of his clothes are generally similar to those of the clothes that would be worn by the real person whom he impersonates. The main fault of his costume is that it looks always much too new. The crease down the front of his trousers is so hard that one fancies it would cut his hands if he touched it. His coat sets so stiffly that one doubts if there be really a human body within it. He looks more like one of the figures in a tailor's fashion-plates than a man. His waistcoat is "a vest," his trousers are "trouserings," his coat is "a cheviot lounge" or "a frock braided." And so he is really little better than the actress, who looks

like a Paris model touched up by the Queen of Sheba.

Rational dress for mimes is a necessary adjunct to rational drama. It will come in time, I hope. But it will never come unless my fellow-critics join me in my spirited effort to hurt the mimes' feelings.

MR. SHAW CRESCENT

January 26, 1901.

HAVING regard to the commonweal, Mr. Shaw bemoans the existence of "reputations" in art, and vents a hope that the attractive specimen acquired by himself will decay quickly. If he is sincere in this protestation, he must change his tactics. He is not going the right way about the business. His new book * will increase the bulk of his reputation, and will make it more durable. In these "Three Plays for Puritans" he has made a perceptible advance from the point he occupied in those "Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant."

When a well-known writer is, like Mr. Shaw, in his forty-fifth year, people are apt to assume that he cannot further advance. He may, it is thought, increase his reputation by repeating himself, but cannot increase it by doing anything better than, or in kind different from, what he has done before. And usually this popular assumption is quite correct. Nine lustres exhaust from a writer any vital stuff that may be in him. The question is not of the amount he has to express, but simply of the time during which he has tried to express it.

* "Three Plays for Puritans." By Bernard Shaw. (Grant Richards.)

The small writer aged 30 will have relatively as much left in him as the great writer aged 30; and neither will have anything to express fifteen years later. Be there never so great an amount of vital stuff in a man—in other words, if he be a genius—he will, nevertheless, be on the shelf (however devoutly he may believe himself to be *sur le tapis*) so soon as his ninth lustre is fulfilled. But to this rule there are, here and there, a few glaring exceptions, and Mr. Shaw happens to be one of them. I care not that he is in his forty-fifth year: he is, I assure you, a young writer; he is still in an early state of development. I will not try to determine whether he be a great writer or otherwise. But I do insist that you should regard him as a young one. Perhaps it will help you if I venture for a moment into that first-personal manner which Mr. Shaw himself has used to such effect. I am, I believe, regarded as a young writer. On the other hand, you think you know all about Mr. Shaw. You think his ideas and his methods are fixed, and that he, as a writer, must continue to be exactly what he already is. Now let me give you a striking proof of your error. Mr. Shaw and I, as writers, are exactly connate. Thirteen years ago, when the writing-instinct first stirred in me, one of my relatives was writing a weekly "London Letter" for a well-known journal in Scarborough. I implored that I might be allowed to write it for him, claiming no reward. He assented. I well remember that the

first paragraph I wrote was in reference to the first number of "The Star," which had just been published. Mr. T. P. O'Connor, in his editorial pronunciamiento, had been hotly philanthropic. "If," he had written, "we enable the charwoman to put two lumps of sugar in her tea instead of one, then we shall not have worked in vain." My comment on this was that if Mr. O'Connor were to find that charwomen did not take sugar in their tea, his paper would, presumably, cease to be issued. I believe the paragraph had a great success, in Scarborough. Recalling it, I do not think much of it. I quote it merely to show that I, who am still regarded as a young writer, am exactly as old as Mr. Shaw. For it was in this very number of "The Star" that Mr. Shaw, as "Corno di Bassetto," made his first bow to the public. Thitherto he had confined himself to speaking on platforms, talking to his friends, reading books. He had never, before the year 1888, been induced to express himself in writing. And thus he is as young a writer as I am. He is still perched on the lap of the gods. Almost every man who has a vocation to writing takes to his pen, as I did, when he is fifteen years old. Mr. Shaw did not take to his before he was twenty-eight. As I have already suggested, the amount that a writer has still to express, and the possibility of novelty in its expression, depends entirely on the time during which he has been writing. Thus, since the writer who begins at the normal age

becomes barren at the age of forty-five, Mr. Shaw, glaring exception that he is, will have celebrated his fifty-eighth birthday before we can pass any definite judgment on his powers. If his future progress in dramaturgy be in ratio to his progress during the past three years, he will leave behind him an immortal name. So I advise him to "slow down" at once.

When he published his "Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant," I, knowing him to be quite young and malleable, thought it well to urge him not to go in for serious drama. "Arms and the Man" and "You Never Can Tell" seemed to me much better, much more sincere and genuine, as comedic farces than were "Mrs. Warren's Profession" and the rest as serious plays. Nor has my opinion changed in the meantime. In his serious plays Mr. Shaw was not himself. He was still the youth groping his way to self-expression, and groping, as so many youths do, in the wrong direction, under the wrong master. Hanging on to the coat-tails of even the wrong master is healthy exercise for a youth; it strengthens his muscles, and so forth. But such exercise must not be overdone. Mr. Shaw has loosened his hold on Ibsen's coat-tails not too soon. I admit that his serious plays were exceedingly good *pastiches* of Ibsen, and that in time he could have written serious plays to which one could have given higher praise than that. Nevertheless, he was not born to write serious plays.

He has too irresponsible a sense of humour. This sense he never could have suppressed so utterly as to prevent it from marring his plays; and, as it is his greatest gift, one does not wish him to suppress it at all. Again, he is (though he may deny that he is) incapable of portraying satisfactorily those human passions which must form the basis of serious drama. In all his serious plays, he tried (and tried very cleverly) to reproduce Ibsen's women. These creatures are tolerable and admirable because they are warmly human, warmly alive. But Mr. Shaw never could get further than their surface-characteristics. And the result was that his heroines were quite appalling. They were just dowdy and ill-conditioned shrews—wasps without waists. I am glad to think that I have seen the last of them. Now that Mr. Shaw has got clean away from the Ibsen formula, and makes no attempt at dealing seriously with the great issues of human life, his heroines are quite delightful and (as far as they go) quite real.

The first of the plays in this book is a melodrama, the second an extravagant historical comedy, the third a romantic "adventure." In fact, the *form* of them is quite frivolous. Seriousness enters into them now and again, but inheres in them never. In "Mrs. Warren" and the rest it was the form that was serious, and the frivolity that could not be kept out. The change in Mr. Shaw's method is welcome because he himself is a jester with serious

interludes, not an occasionally jocular seer. The new method is for him the artistic method. All three plays are presented on a large, loose scale which is about as far as anything could be from the strait, strict form of his early plays—as far from it as Mr. Shaw's true self is from Ibsen's. And Mr. Shaw uses this large, loose scale in a thoroughly masterly way, having found it for himself by the light of nature, and not having imposed it on himself as a duty. I admit that the last play, "Captain Brassbound's Conversion," is not masterly. The admission is, indeed, wrung from me by the fact that I elaborately disparaged the play in these columns a few short weeks ago. Nevertheless, it marks a distinct advance from the serious plays: it is much more capable than were they of being treated with respect. Of the first play, "The Devil's Disciple," I have also written here, and, reading it, I have nothing to subtract from the praises I heaped on it after seeing it acted. The second play, "Cæsar and Cleopatra," is quite new to me. It is, I think, far the best thing Mr. Shaw has yet done. Every scene in it is delicious. Most of the scenes are mere whimsical embroidery, a riotous sequence of broadly humorous incidents. But some of them, very cleverly woven in, are true psychological comedy. Both Cæsar and Cleopatra are perfectly credible studies. Of course, if Mr. Shaw had tried to portray Cæsar in some really serious love affair, or to give us Cleopatra in the

Antonine phase, he would have failed utterly. But here, merely, is Cæsar as an important public man who knows that a little chit of a girl-queen has taken a fancy to him, and is tickled by the knowledge, and behaves very kindly to her, and rather wishes he were young enough to love her. This kind of emotion Mr. Shaw can delineate sharply and truly. Nor could the kittenish admiration of Cleopatra for her hero have been more sympathetically shown to us. I wish very much that this play could be produced. But it would cost many thousands of pounds, and managers are coy of a vast production which is not the setting of some vast dramatic motive. Indeed, there is, as I have more than once demonstrated, an artistic, besides a financial, objection to such a production. Nevertheless, if I were a very rich manager, I should produce the play, if only to watch how a modern British audience would be affected by the early Briton whom Mr. Shaw has foisted into his play. Mr. Alfred Bishop would be engaged by me for this part. He would be immense in it.

I am not sure that Mr. Shaw's prefaces, notes, and stage-directions are not even more delightful than the plays themselves. In them, too, I find that Mr. Shaw has made real progress. He has always had a "style," in the sense that he has always been able to express accurately, in a live manner, the thoughts that are in him. But now he is evidently beginning to realise that a style may

be beautiful, and ought to be beautiful, in itself. In one of the prefaces, especially, in which he describes the career and character of Mr. Cunninghame Graham, he introduces some really graceful and charming prose. The Puritan, paying homage to the Cavalier, decks himself with some of the Cavalier's own plumes, and looks, I am bound to say, very well in them. But I hope Mr. Shaw will not, like so many of our young writers, pay attention to manner at the expense of matter. I notice, with misgiving, his use of the word "stupent." He must beware the fascination of archaisms. On the other hand, I am glad to find in his prefaces evidence that he has just been reading Plato. To quote Plato freely, as he does, is a very proper habit in a young writer.

"THE DRAMA OF THE DUSTBIN"

February 23, 1901.

This phrase was not coined by me; I never alliterate. It came lately from the humming mint of one whose last words (long may they remain unuttered!) will probably, through lifelong habit, be alliterated. Mr. Clement Scott issued it into our currency as a description of "Mr. and Mrs. Daventry." As such, it seems to me hardly apt. For, whatever faults that play may have had, it was, at least, fresh and vital; thrown by Mr. Frank Harris upon the stage, it was an explosive bomb rather than a heap of stale and negligible refuse, and many of the critics were seriously injured by it—none more seriously than Mr. Scott himself; and for some months it has been exploding nightly, with great noise and shock. To connect it with the dustbin is, therefore, quite manifestly absurd. However, Mr. Scott's phrase must be dear to him, and I should not like to make him drop it. Merely would I urge him to apply it more carefully. There is a kind of drama to which it really is quite applicable. Of this kind an obvious sample is the play now claiming my attention. For this play I regret to say Mr. Scott himself is partly responsible. But let not that consideration prevent him from follow-

ing my lead and applying his phrase as I do. For here is stale and negligible refuse indeed. Here are the picked bones and the broken eggshells and the potato-parings of drama, embedded, with many other nameless scraps and shreds, in the dust of ages. Time, one had thought, had carted them away long ago. But Nature is an idle vestry, and the opened lid in the area of the Garrick Theatre wafts to our nostrils the faint unwholesome savour of "Peril." Here, I protest, is "The Drama of the Dustbin" indeed.

Why was the lid opened? Why were the mimes sent down to rummage? What lost jewel did any one hope to recover? Had Mr. Bourchier really found, throughout the length and breadth of the MSS. submitted to him as a manager, so lamentable a dearth of anything like talent for dramaturgy that "Peril" seemed to him the best and only policy? I will not believe it. I prefer to think that in reviving this play he was actuated solely by a tender desire to cheer Sardou's declining years, to prove to that outmoded manipulator that the beer now thought of him is not so small in London as in Paris. Such a motive is very creditable to Mr. Bourchier as a man. But I would urge him to take a hint from Count von Bülow and wear his manly heart in his managerial head. "Peril" was a very good entertainment in its generation. But its generation is past, and therewith is past the vogue of those little tricks and dodges and wheezes

which were Sardou's sole stock-in-trade. We may not have progressed very far; but we are far enough on to have left Sardou out of sight; and, when Mr. Bourchier doubles back and returns breathless with Sardou in his arms, none of us, I fear, can contrive to force a smile or welcome for the rescued derelict. We have reached that stage at which we demand from the writer of a comedy that he shall make his characters live, and that he shall develop his theme more or less as life might develop it. We cannot pretend to be interested in characters which have utterly failed to evoke a spark of interest in their creator, or in a theme out of which he has not attempted to make anything but one stage-situation. In "Peril" Sardou's primary characters are (1) the elderly married man, (2) the juvenile wife, (3) the young man intervening. But he does not attempt to show us the character of one of them. He merely dumps them down on the boards—A, B, and C—and proceeds to show us what might happen if a door were locked and a window were open, and if a chair were overturned and a bell-rope snapped in two, and if the shutters closed easily from within and the balcony were twenty feet above the ground, and if a lady's-maid had gone to bed and a family doctor was still sitting up. It was in order to lead up to this door-*cum* - window - *cum* - shutters - *cum* - chair - *cum* - bell-rope - *cum* - lady's-maid - *cum* - family-doctor accident, and not with any particle of interest in

anything else, that Sardou (as was his wont) wrote "Nos Intimes." When Mr. Clement Scott and Mr. B. C. Stephenson adapted the affair, the result was quite popular, no doubt . . . At that time, if I am not mistaken, Mr. Bourchier was in Eton collars. He is no longer in them. And he might put away, also, those other childish things of which "Peril" is a type.

"Peril" is not merely childish: it is (to me, who am no prude) positively offensive. By the second act of "Mr. and Mrs. Daventry" I was not at all offended. The play was a serious reflection of life, and its showy "situation" was purged of offence by the fact that it was a necessary episode for the development of certain realistic characters. It meant something. It led from one interesting point to another. Yet Mr. Scott was horrified by it. Sardou's showy situation in "Nos Intimes" is, in itself, identical with Mr. Harris' in "Mr. and Mrs. Daventry": a man violently "tempting" an unwilling married lady in a locked drawing-room. But, whereas for Mr. Harris this situation is merely a means to an intellectual end, for Sardou it is the end itself, and also the beginning and the middle. For him nothing else exists. From him we get nothing but the unmeaning representation of illicit sensuality. And this, I am prude enough to admit, is "shocking." The sight of Mr. Graham Browne (as C) slowly stalking Miss Violet Vanbrugh (as B) round a sofa, emitting sundry grunts and gasps, and

finally catching her and fastening his pent-up kisses on her, does seem to me a really unwholesome sight; inasmuch as we are asked to see it merely for its own sake, and for sake of nothing before or beyond. Now that I have shown cause why I dislike Sardou's situation, and not Mr. Harris', Mr. Scott might occupy a spare quarter of an hour worse than in justifying the obvious opposition of his attitude to mine.

The parts of A, B, and C are so conventional that they give to their interpreters no chance of anything but a display of histrionic technique. Mr. Brandon Thomas is technically good as A, and so is Mr. Graham Browne as C; but Miss Vanbrugh is not so as B, inasmuch as her part is (except for a few moments) a comedic part, and she has not a drop of comedic blood in her veins. In highly coloured tragedy she is a valuable actress, but in comedy she is forced. Her eyes, which dilate naturally, sparkle only under protest; her groans or shrieks have quite the true ring, but her smiles are merely muscular expansions. However, it matters very little to me whether a Sardou heroine be played well or ill. In the whole of "Peril" the only part which deserves to be well played is the part of Sir Woodbine Grafton—one of the figures with whose irrelevant antics the dramatist has drawn the play out to the required length. This part, in itself an amusing piece of burlesque, is a good opportunity for "eccentric character." Of this opportunity

Mr. Frederick Kerr makes the most. But the Grafton jewel is not so precious as to compensate us for the opening and ransacking of the aforesaid dustbin.

You will be able to view the contents of another dustbin if you go to the Prince of Wales' Theatre. There the rubbish is called "Peg Woffington," though why it is not called "Masks and Faces," as Tom Taylor, its shooter, called it, I really cannot conjecture. It will not seem to you quite such sorry rubbish as "Peril." Not being literally, it is not metaphorically "offensive." Moreover, the fact that it is a costume play will save you the full shock of its old-fashioned technique. Hoops and coifs and scarlet heels will enable you to connive at its puerile construction—to treat it with some measure of that consideration which you extend to (say) Oliver Goldsmith, but which you could not possibly extend to Tom Taylor if one of his other plays were revived in the costume of to-day. (I trust Mr. Bourchier is not meditating such a revival, and hasten to nip the possibility in the bud.) You will have the further consolation of not having to search frantically for the reason why *this* dustbin has been opened and overturned. The reason is obvious. *This* dustbin was known to contain two jewels among the refuse. The parts of Peg Woffington and Triplet are admirable parts; and whenever a new mistress of sentimental comedy appears, or a new master of it, "Masks and Faces" is pretty

sure to be revived for his or her benefit. Rubbish it is, and I doubt whether any impersonations, how brilliant soever, of the two valuable characters in it, could make a modern audience quite tolerant of it as an evening's entertainment. But, as I have often pointed out, it is the mimes and not the members of the public who ordain that certain old plays shall be revived. You must reconcile yourselves to the probability that "Masks and Faces" is dust that will always be shovelled from its bin whenever there is a histrionic talent to blossom in it. Whether to see the play, or to stay at home, is a question which you must settle according to the proportion between your dislike of dramatic refuse and your delight in histrionic blossoms. To me, personally, Miss Marie Tempest as Peg Woffington is a sufficient consolation for seeing the play. I have seen one or two other Pegs in my time, but not since I came to years of discrimination. Consequently, my pleasure in Miss Tempest's bonny and spirited performance is not interrupted by favourable or unfavourable comparisons with her predecessors. Miss Tempest has the comedian's temperament: laughter and tears come readily from her, commingling, helping each other. Laughter, indeed, in the literal sense, comes rather too readily from her. She laughs too persistently at the end of her sentences. But this is merely a fault in technique, the result of her training in a form of drama in which the chief aim is, not to

produce an illusion of naturalness, but to keep up the spirits of the audience. Miss Tempest will soon rid herself of this fault. Meanwhile, she is to be congratulated as a very fragrant blossom in the dust. A solitary blossom, too; for she wins her success despite what must be the great difficulty of acting well in connexion with so stodgily unimaginative a Triplet as Mr. Frank Cooper, whom one can congratulate only on his success in refuting the tradition that Triplet is "actor-proof."

BY-GONES UP TO DATE

March 2, 1901.

"ANDROMACHE," the play written by Mr. Gilbert Murray and produced by the Stage Society, is an interesting experiment. This sounds as though I had been very much bored but were anxious to be as polite as possible. Certainly, other things being equal, these uncommercial plays deserve from the critic more politeness than he would bestow on plays written in hope of lucre: be they bad, they deserve more forbearance; good, more enthusiasm. But please do not assume that "Andromache" bored me. I have given it the epithet "interesting" in all sincerity. Indeed (thus do I convict myself of an otiose phrase,) every experiment is bound to be interesting. Its interest is not greater or less accordingly as it succeeds or fails, but according to the materials used, and the manner of their usage, and the kind of discovery that is hoped for. If the flying-machine be consummated, or the North Pole danced on *pede libero* by a live explorer, or the philosopher's stone at length alchemised into actuality, so much the better, of course. But the fascination of these emprises, and the amount one may learn from them, is independent of their success. Mr. Murray's attempt to

make a good modern play out of Hellenic materials does not, in my opinion, " come off." But it is not the less interesting on that account. And the Stage Society did well to give Mr. Murray a chance of repeating behind footlights the experiment lately made by him between covers.

In one sense the experiment is actually successful. It proves to me beyond doubt the impossibility that any one hereafter will achieve what Mr. Murray fails to do. I do not mean that Mr. Murray has done his work as well as it could be done. (On the contrary, and with due deference, I shall chide him for several faults in workmanship.) But he has tried to do a thing which no one else has tried to do —a thing of which, till it was attempted, I could not have predicated utter impracticability. Suppose that ere I had read or seen the play some one had come to me and said " Look at Hellas ! Think of those tremendous legends from which the Hellenic dramatists inspired themselves into immortality ! Why should not these immortal legends be looted for display on the quite modern stage ? That which Æschylus and the rest told in their way why should not a modern dramatist tell in his ? Archaism of form is not necessary to matter which is eternal. Such matter ought to receive the form of every successive age. Therefore let us enliven ourselves with revised versions of Greek drama. Let these characters speak simple English prose. Let the unities be violated. Let there be entr'actes. Away

with the chorus! Why not even a little comic relief here and there? Given the proper dramatists, there is no reason why the Greek drama should not be effectively Anglo-modernised." Had such suggestions been made to me I might have swallowed them. I know not whether they were made to, or evolved by, Mr. Murray; anyhow, he has acted on them. He has fixed Neoptolemus and Andromache, Orestes and Hermione, into modern form, giving them three acts and two scenes, substituting comic for choric relief, and classic English for classic Greek. And the result is that we ourselves see the play with modern eyes. We form modern opinions of the characters, and of their deeds and destinies. When these things are shown to us in the manner of Æschylus or Euripides we are taken out of ourselves, are spirited into the skins of ancient Greeks: we see and feel the things as the ancient Greeks saw and felt them. But at a modern demonstration of them we are just ourselves. That is a state foreseen by Mr. Murray and by my hypothetical agitator. If, as the latter said, the Greek legends are for all time, then we can be moved by a contemporary version of them as deeply as were the original Greeks. But the fact appears that we cannot be moved by a contemporary version. Mr. Murray's "Andromache" proves that we cannot. Instead of being purged, according to the ancient prescription, by pity and awe, we are utterly unaffected. We are even dis-

affected. The superstitions that were impressive to us in the old version become definitely absurd in the new. The deeds that were inevitable and pitiable become merely incredible phenomena of brutality. We feel as though we had stumbled into a conclave of moonstruck butchers. And thus we realise that the Greek legends are not for all time. What is immortal is the form in which they were presented. And that is the only form in which they should ever be presented. Every age has its own beliefs or tendencies, formulable in contemporary art. Presented to posterity in their original art-form, these beliefs or tendencies are (through the imagination which that art-form stirs) as potent, or nearly as potent, as ever they were. Æschylus is a force hardly less accessible (to those who can understand Greek) than Ibsen. Shakespeare is as near to us as Mr. Henry Arthur Jones. But to present Æschylean things well in modern English form is as a task not more hopeless than would be the writing of a good modern English play in Elizabethan blank verse or in Greek rhythms for three actors and a chorus. In the latter case we should be attuned to the ancient Greek or Elizabethan spirit, and so should be unable to make head or tail of the characters. In the former case we are attuned to our own spirit, and our receptivity is limited to the things cognate with that spirit. It matters not how conscientiously and cleverly the dramatist may have done his job. The job should not be done at

all. That Mr. Murray has done it I am glad, inasmuch as, no one having done it before him, its futility had not been proven. Mr. Murray has added a little new fact to our store of knowledge. Let us be duly grateful.

Now that I have declared the whole scheme of "Andromache" to be impossible, it may seem rather unnecessary that I should point out to Mr. Murray how he might have made the play better than it is. However, if a dramatic critic were to refrain from writing anything uncalled-for, his occupation would be all but gone. So let me proceed to chide Mr. Murray for turning Andromache into a modern Christian. By doing so, he has made his play even more impossible than it need have been. The contrast of this Andromache, with her philosophic disbelief in the necessity for eternal bloodshed, makes the other characters even more grotesque for us than they need have been. Cast in their midst, she acts as a kind of deputy for us. She sees them with our eyes, and criticises them with our lips. She is not one of them. She is, in fact, thoroughly inartistic on the part of Mr. Murray. Another fault which Mr. Murray should have avoided lies in the technical construction of his play. The division of a play into several acts makes it necessary that every act shall be an organism in itself. An ancient Greek play, being undivided (except by choruses, which are actual links between one part and another) is judged only

as a whole. But a modern play, interspersed with entr'actes, has to submit to interim judgments—has to be judged not only as a whole, but also in its separate parts. And neither the first nor the second act of "Andromache" would be in itself strong enough to pass muster even if the story unfolded in it were of a kind that appealed to us. Taken together and joined to the third act, without one interval for the stretching of our legs and the summing-up of our impressions, they might form a solid whole. Indeed, having read the play as a book, I can testify that they would. But, the unity of space being violated, a continuous production would not be possible, even if Mr. Murray had so far lapsed from his modernity as to desire it.

Mention of the book reminds me that the writing leaves much to be desired. Of course, Mr. Murray writes in a scholarly manner. But we look to him for something more than refinement of language: we look for a certain imaginative glow; and we do not get it. Throughout, the language is merely that of the Common Room, not always quite scrupulously filtered. Praying to Thetis, one of the characters says "Accept these offerings from the bondmaidens Aithra, and Pholoe, and Deianassa; and grant all good things to them and theirs." Them and theirs! Why not "their circle" at once? There are more than a few lapses of this kind, quite distressing. Another fault is that much of the dialogue is like a literal translation

(than which nothing is less dramatic) of Euripidean stichomuthi. I select at random the following passage in which a priest questions Orestes about a gold chain that he wears :—

Orestes. A banished man must have his wealth in little compass.
Priest. A chain like that should buy an exile's return.
Orestes. I care not to return.
Priest. Are the friends of the dead so bitter against you ?
Orestes. The friends of the dead are dead, and my friends are dead.

This is not the way to set about making the Greek spirit live in modern English drama. Perhaps it is not exactly the way in which a fourth-form boy construes his Euripides on a cold grey morning ; but it is exactly the way in which his form-master, complacently, shows him how the thing ought to be done. . . . However, dramatic critic though I am, I will buffet no more air. I cast the play from me, gently, and with all acknowledgments to the author ; whilst of the mimes who interpreted it (and who, had they interpreted it never so brilliantly, could not have made it possible as drama) I will say merely that they were like a hutchful of white rabbits trying to behave like a cageful of lions, and failing.

"MRS. EBBSMITH" AND THE BENSONIANS

March 9, 1901.

"THE NOTORIOUS MRS. EBBSMITH," now revived at the Royalty Theatre, belongs to that period when Mr. Pinero was respectfully begging to call your attention to his latest assortment of Spring Problemings (Scandinavian Gents' own materials made up. West End style and fit guaranteed). And the average critic, as he tries the suit on again, before the mirror of Time, and tugs at it and pats it and wags his legs in it, is protesting loudly that it looks as high-class as ever. Quite sincere though his protestation may be, I cannot echo it. The garment seems to show its age pretty clearly. It is of the fashion set six years ago. It is not threadbare, certainly. There is plenty of "wear" in it. It need not be given away yet. But it would need a good many alterations before one could look smart in it. In other words, the play is still an exciting, almost an absorbing, story; but on no one save the average critic could it possibly impose as being what it pretends to be: a solemn and wide-eyed consideration of life. Its two essential characters are not normal types; they are remarkably abnormal. They are not mere puppets, however.

On the contrary, they are realised in a very intense manner; and their behaviour, in circumstances which are (except when the author fakes them for theatrical effect) quite credible, is (except when the author fakes it for theatrical effect) quite credible. But they are both abnormal, decentralised; whereas it is only from the study and projection of normal, central types that any philosophic expression of life can be made. That the irregular union of Mrs. Ebbsmith with Lucas Cleeve was a failure is no evidence at all that such unions must fail. The two characters happen to be utterly antagonistic to each other, and there's an end of it. That Lucas Cleeve was impatient of Mrs. Ebbsmith's theories is no evidence at all that a woman cannot be at once the darling and the intellectual companion of a man; for Mr. Pinero has deprived Lucas of any inkling that there might be a possible compromise between the two separate states. That Mrs. Ebbsmith pulls a Bible out of a stove does not prove that a woman cannot without the consolation of religion stand upright in the conflict of her emotions. If she had been, like many women, brought up in some kind of religious creed which circumstances had led her to reject and despise, then her action might have had some significance. As she was educated in unbelief, the suggestion that she would have (1) treated the Bible as the cause of her misery, (2) rescued it as her salvation, is a mere theatrical excrescence. So far from having any

general significance, it is palpably untrue to her own particular self. It is an exciting incident, I admit readily. And, of course, it makes an effective appeal to the religious consciences of such play-goers as don't think. But any meaning that it has is nonsense, and I suggest to Mr. Pinero that he might have been as exciting and as "edifying" without so utterly disorganising his presentment of character if he had made Mrs. Ebbsmith throw the Bible (as she has previously thrown a bouquet) into the canal, from which it might have been retrieved by a pet spaniel. The dog, wagging its tail and shaking the water off its back would have brought down the curtain quite as effectively, and not painfully, as does the lady, quivering over her scorched hand. The last act of the play, again, is a crude appeal to the "unco" but unreflective "guid." Mrs. Ebbsmith, had her maker dared to let her act for herself, would never have accepted the offer of that "retreat" to the Ketherick parsonage. The offer might have touched her; but the idea of accompaniment by the clergyman and his sister would have sent her off at a very sharp tangent. Again, being a woman of fine nature, she never would have consented, as Mr. Pinero makes her consent, to undertake the impossibly degrading position offered to her by the Cleeve family. Indeed, that such an offer would have been made seems to me hardly credible. During the third act, I suspected that Mr. Pinero had had it made in

order that he might bring about the very effectively ironic scene when Cleeve imagines that Mrs. Ebbsmith has been won over to that which really, of course, she regards as a repellent impossibility. That she should, in the last act, agree to the proposal, merely because the legitimate Mrs. Cleeve shows signs of genuine emotion, is a development which must startle even the most gullible playgoer in London. However, I am ungracious in finding so many faults. I repeat that the play remains, as it always was, an exciting story. And, by reason of the admirably capable way in which it is constructed, and of the general vividness of the two chief characters, one is quite willing to tolerate (though not to overlook) its sacrifices of truth to effect, and to forgive (though not to approve) its pretentious air of being somehow philosophic and Ibsenish. That Mr. Pinero is a born dramatist I never deny. It is because of what he is not (and fain would have appeared to be when he wrote "Mrs. Ebbsmith") that I cannot give myself the pleasure of joining that chorus in which those others, a little uneasily, are always acclaiming him "our premier dramatist." I cannot find a more signal proof of his technical genius than that this play, despite its continuous and tedious implication that he is what he isn't, still retains in itself, after the lapse of six long years, a power of stimulation. Despite its inconsistencies, the part of Mrs. Ebbsmith is a fine one, and Mrs. Campbell invests it

with all that quiet and haunting realism of which the secret is hers. Her glamour is as it has always been. Her art has become subtler, more potent. As Lucas Cleeve, Mr. Courtenay Thorpe, that most elastic actor, makes his usual success.

Æsthetically, there are many vulnerable points in the system upheld by the Benson company; nor is my rapier immaculate of its gore. As critic, I have partially condemned it. Yet do I, as man, revel in it without reservation. It is as cosy a thing as ever was invented. It is an unrivalled pander to what Daudet called "*l'habitude de l'habitude*"—that instinct shared by us all. To see over and over again, with brief intervals, the same mimes, on the same stage, is a true and cumulative pleasure. First sight of the Benson company is not, I admit, a ravishing experience. But I defy you to be not fascinated after the sixth or seventh time, and to be not more fascinated after the eighth than after the seventh. Settled in your seat, you glance at your programme, and are soothed by the familiar bead-roll, wondering how the mimes named in it will "be" to-night. For every one of them, as he or she comes on, hall-marked with his or her own face and port and voice, you have a smile of welcome. They have become as brothers and sisters to you, even as to one another. They touch not merely the instinct of familiarity, but even the family instinct. And the fact that you never see them twice in similar guise saves you from

that sense of sameness which in an actual family often alloys affection with boredom. The peculiar cosiness inherent in a stock-company cannot be diffused through a large theatre. Last year, when the Bensonians were figuring in the Lyceum Theatre, that subtle essence of theirs evaporated and was lost to us. Only a troupe of giants could in that dim immensity have wafted the family effect. But the little house in Panton Street is quite another matter. It is so little as to be almost homelike. Mimes in it are no midgets: they are life-sized. We are all very near to them, and feel as though we could almost shake hands with them across the footlights or converse with them *sotto voce* from our seats. Thus cosiness reigns supreme. From an artistic, as well as from this merely personal, standpoint, the removal of the Bensonian venue from the Lyceum to the Comedy is a welcome change. The cavernous stage of the Lyceum cannot be made a tolerable background except at great cost of time and money. Such cost the Bensonians cannot, by reason of their system, afford. Nor can they afford that cost which alone could make the stage of the Comedy a really good background. But such scenery as they have is enough to make the background passable: there is no distractive inadequacy. Also, the mimes' performances can be appreciated. To fill a great theatre, great acting is needed. In an ordinary stock-company there can be no great acting: good-all-roundness—or, say, excellent-all-

roundness—is the pinnacle. At the Lyceum, therefore, the Bensonian acting was ineffective. But at the Comedy such good actors as Mr. Oscar Asche, Mr. Lyall Swete and Mr. George Weir produce the impression they deserve. If only Mr. Benson would not persist in grafting the star-system on the stock-system—two things utterly incompatible—his latest production, "As You Like It," would be really admirable. Shakespeare wrote some leading parts which Mr. Benson can play very well. But Orlando is not one of them. Nor, emphatically, is Rosalind a part for Mrs. Benson. I wish Mr. Benson would, in his very genuine devotion to Shakespeare's memory, ask himself, whenever he is meditating a new production, "If the poet were alive to-day, and I were asking him to dictate the cast, would he make me and my wife play the two leading parts? If not, which are the two parts he would assign to us?" If Mr. Benson would think out the answers to these questions, and act according to them, he would be doing no more than justice to the modesty and the high intelligence for which we all like him. In "As You Like It" he might well have appeared as Jaques. Yet am I glad he did not do so, inasmuch as I should not then have heard Mr. Swete's extraordinarily skilful and touching treatment of the speech about the "seven ages." From playing the Duke he would have been debarred by Mr. Asche's obvious qualifications for the part. He might have fallen back on

Touchstone, as who Mr. Weir is not good at all. Touchstone is a fantastic creature, needing imaginative interpretation. And Mr. Weir, whose solid and straightforward humour is very useful and delightful in such parts as Dromio, or Sir Toby Belch, or the First Gravedigger, is not an imaginative actor. Mr. Benson *is*. He would have been a very good Touchstone. The qualities which he lacks—ardour, "go," force, spontaneous self-expression, naturalness—are quite unnecessary for Touchstone. And without them poor Orlando is quite null.

MR. BOURCHIER ANALYSED

March 16, 1901.

DEVOUT study of human character leads to the conclusion that one man is identically the same as another. Every tendency produces in its owner a proportionate tendency in the opposite direction. Analyse his soul, and you will find nothing that is not cancelled by something else. One man has no tendencies at all, is null in the first analysis. Another—and he is more common—has some very strong and obvious tendency, thus duping the superficial observer into the belief that this is the keynote and pivot of him, and that he is a definite, peculiar person in virtue of it; whereas, really, there is an inevitable reaction that makes it (and with it him) naught. In some cases you will find the two tendencies alternating in lengthy "bouts"—supplementing, but (like Box and Cox) never stumbling across, each other. Usually, however, the two tendencies synchronise, one of them showing itself in one part of its owner's life, the other in another. Take the case of Mr. Arthur Bourchier. How would he by the superficial observer be summed up? As "breezy," of course. And very breezy he is, as an actor. Now what is the reverse of breeziness? Morbidness. Then be sure that

MR. BOURCHIER ANALYSED

Mr. Bourchier is as morbid as he is breezy. As he is always acting and so, demonstrably, is being breezy every night of his life (except Sunday) for two or three hours, it follows that his morbidness must occupy two or three of the remaining hours in every week-day. Fatigue, supper, sleep, probably prevent him from being morbid before he rises in the morning. Now, a few years ago it would have been impossible to prove, except by such circumstantial evidence as I have given, that Mr. Bourchier is ever morbid; still more impossible to determine what part of his days is especially overcast. Of Mr. Bourchier, except as an actor, one knew (or, at least, would have had to pretend to know) nothing at all. Only on the stage was he a public character. But now he is an actor-manager. He is a purveyor, as well as an interpreter, of plays. This is an arduous business, which means busy mornings. Thus by the policy of Mr. Bourchier as manager, by the quality of the plays favoured by him, we can see what his morning mood is. Does he produce bright, strong, fresh, astringent work? To "Peril" at the Garrick were such epithets applicable? Was that a play which could have been accepted for production by any man whose vitality was not at zero? Mr. Bourchier's undertaking of it was a clear sign of despondency, of despair. "There are no plays written now," he must have groaned. "The art of dramaturgy is a lost art. All is darkness. Muffle me in my cloak, give me my spade

and lantern. 'Tis a starless night, and I would fain prowl among the tombstones. The owls and the bats and the quivering cypresses will suit well my grim humour. And maybe, with luck, I shall disinter some poor bones that the public would like to see articulated. A ghoul's emprise! yet I am strangely eager for it. Listen to the wind, and expect me when you see me." So he stole forth, and "Peril" was subsequently jigged before our eyes. But that was not enough for him. It might have satisfied the reaction of an ordinarily breezy man. But Mr. Bourchier is so extraordinarily breezy that he must needs creep back to the graveyard, and shovel up another set of bones, to be exhibited at the Criterion. "Peril" at the Garrick, at the Criterion "Mamma": such is the horrid consequence of our carelessness in leaving two theatres under the control of an extraordinarily breezy actor.

With "Peril" I dealt so lately that I may spare you a detailed consideration of "Mamma." The two things are on all fours with each other. Both were adapted some years ago from the French—a number of years sufficient to have robbed them of any vitality that may not have been dried out of them in the actual process of transplantation. "Peril" is a dull and offensive comedy. "Mamma" is a dull and inoffensive farce. That is the only detectable difference between the two things. As I am not so utterly unblest with sense

of humour that I can be amused by the situations and jests of farce which is even of the contemporary English kind, I will not base my declaration that this aged French farce is as dead as a door-nail on my own failure to be amused by it. Having no standard of my own, I cannot distinguish between farces that are good and bad of their kind. I can but evaluate the opinion of the public. So my condemnation of "Mamma" must be derived from the behaviour of the audience on the first night—from the hollow laughs evoked by the mimes, and the hollow silence that fell almost immediately after the curtain. Of the performance, too, I have little to say. Mrs. Calvert, in the principal part, which demanded rowdy accentuation, went quietly and solemnly through her mannerisms, and did not enliven me. Mr. Giddens wagged along in what I take to be the duly imbecile manner, and Miss Ethel Matthews did nothing in particular rather better than it could have been done by a mechanical doll. There was a *débutante*, Miss Beatrice Forbes-Robertson, who seemed very lively and intelligent. I hope to see her again, in happier circumstances. Mr. Arthur Bourchier was as breezy as ever. It is delightful to see such breeziness on the stage, but when I think of the price he has to pay for it—the price *we* have to pay for it—I wish Nature had withheld it from him, or that Fate had not cast him into management. However, Nature is inexorable, and so is Fate. We cannot

alter their decrees. At the same time, we can mitigate the effects of them. Though a breezy actor-manager is a grave danger, and difficult to deal with, the resources of civilisation are not exhausted. We have a Censor. And why should not we bless this official with a *raison d'être* by empowering him to arrest the breezy actor-manager in his propensity to exhume old bones? To open a tomb that contains human remains is the most difficult thing in the world. You may win over the next of kin, and the Home Office itself; but the Cemetery Authorities, or the Consistory Court, or something of the sort, will surely crop up to foil you. That spirited lady who lately sought access to a ducal vault was backed up by the sympathy of a whole public athirst for sensation. Almost every one wished the matter to be sifted thoroughly and at once. Yet the lady availed nothing. The more she tried, the further was she bandied away from the goal. Does the public sympathise with the breezy actor-manager on his lugubrious excursions? Does any one wish him to exhume these skeletons of decently-buried plays? No one. And yet there is no power to divert him from his purpose. The only party he need consult is the owner of the grave, who—be he Mr. Grundy, or Mr. Scott, or any other—always seems to assent with alacrity. In the interest of dramatic art, a strong prohibitive power should be created. Things should be made as difficult for Mr. Bourchier as for Mrs. Druce.

LATIN AND ANGLO-SAXON MIMES

April 13, 1901.

PERIODICALLY the cry goes up "How long is London to lack a Conservatoire, such as Paris boasts, for the making of mimes?" Pleaded are the indubitable facts that France produces a greater number than we of first-rate mimes, and that the companies supporting these mimes do their work admirably, whereas in London the subordinate parts are but so many vehicles for display of dufferdom. And these facts are attributed to the French care for, and the English neglect of, specific tutelage. Well! this seems to me a shallow theory, mistaken and misleading. The root of the mischief lies, I think, much deeper than our agitators pretend. I believe the mischief to be rooted rather in nationality than in national neglect—rather in the fact that, whereas the French are French, we happen to be English. As I am at this moment in France, and so have instant opportunity for comparison between the two sides of the Channel (without any opportunity for describing to you the new plays with which London, doubtless, bristles), and as the offer made (or *not* made) by Mr. Carnegie to endow us with a national theatre has duly revived that

periodical cry to which I have alluded, I may as well set myself the holiday-task of explaining to you exactly why, in my view of the nature of things, our mimes are less good—incurably less good—than French mimes.

My "desk" is a little sunlit disc of marble outside the Café de la Paix. Excuse the kakophonous collision of those two nouns! There is no equivalent for either. Sound, even on a holiday, must defer to sense. I might say "I write on a little sunlit disc," &c.? But that, strictly, would imply a MS. that would never reach you—a pencilled scribble that not even the waiter would read ere he deleted it with his napkin. And truly, why should I not write this article even so—not on paper that endureth, but on faithless marble? The cosmic movement would not be impeded by the lapse. Nay! you might wear as an ornament my golden silence of one week. But I must not let the holiday-mood instil into me a sense of proportion. Though here, far from the foggy four-mile radius, I am peculiarly susceptible to that paralysing poison, I can at least inoculate myself with an injection of commercialism—*aur: sac: fam:* as it is called in the prescriptions. Though I cannot persuade myself that there is any true justification for my hebdomadal excursus, I can at least write it, write it in time for the post. This process is the less irksome because study of the fresh folk around me is really relevant and necessary to my theme. At

most of the marble discs two or three men are seated. In all of them I notice one common peculiarity. Though the hour is not yet noon—not yet that hour before which Englishmen never move their lips except for some very good reason, all these Frenchmen are conversing with the utmost animation. They are all excited about something or other. Were I deaf, or were their language mere gibberish to me, I should conclude that some great national crisis obsessed them, or that every one of them was in the thick of some private crisis on his own account. But I can both hear and understand the conversation of them who are nearest to me. The three men to my right are differing as to the age of a well-known Spanish dancer; the two men to my left are agreeing as to the merits of a new kind of automobile which they saw yesterday; in front of me two other men are deciding where they shall breakfast to-day. It is fair to take these three conversations which I can hear as typical of the others which I cannot—to strike from them an average for the whole set of tables. I add them together, divide them by three, and deduce that every one around me is making a prodigious fuss about nothing. Going a step further, I deduce that all the other natives of France are making a prodigious fuss about nothing. Nor, I think, will any one who knows them dispute my conclusion. The French people are born with a natural gift and lust for expression. They do not but talk, as do we,

lingually. They talk with their hands, with all the muscles of their faces, with all the resources of their lungs, with their whole souls and bodies. They accentuate everything, magnify everything, drive everything home. Such is their natural manner, giving them (for me, at least) a constant fascination. From the national standpoint, possibly, it were better for them to be more self-contained. We in England are wont to regard this kind of *disinvoltura* as a sign of national decadence. I am not sure, however, that we are right. Probably Frenchmen, in the heyday of France, were as excitable and voluble in their manner as now; and probably we ourselves shall (note the tact of that future tense!) go down the hill as stolidly and silently as we have come up it. But my point is one of artistic rather than of political ethnology. It is simply this: that France is a nation of born mimes, and that England is a nation of males and females who cannot act. For who is the born mime? He or she, obviously, who can transmit whatever the author has given to him or her for transmission to the audience. This job of transmission can only, *ob naturam theatri*, be done through quick concentration. For the mime, as for the dramatist, time flies very quickly. Like the dramatist, the mime must put a very great deal into a very little space, and must, moreover, shoot that very great deal far across the footlights. How is he to do this? Emotion and intelligence alone will not enable him to do it at all. He must have

a variable face, a variable voice, variable gestures. His whole body must be always alert, always responsive to what is in him or to what has been put into him. Only so can he transmit the right effects to the audience. Such, then, is the root of the technique of acting. In any ordinary Frenchman it is innate. He does not have to acquire it. If he become an actor, his only technical difficulty will be in not overdoing the exaggeration. His difficulty will be one of degree merely. For the Englishman who becomes an actor the difficulty will be one of kind. The Englishman is unaccustomed to, and averse from, any expressiveness. He is by nature taciturn. When he breaks silence he breaks it merely in a mumble or a monotone. His face is a mask. His body is a log. His hands are useless except for manual labour. Inflect or gesticulate he cannot. Consequently, when he becomes an actor he has to begin his whole self over again. He has to take it in hand and force it into an unnatural dance. What wonder that it dances, like a bear, clumsily, sulkily? What wonder that the average of French acting is so much higher than ours, when the French actor starts with practically all the needed technique at his expressive finger-tips, and so can straightway devote himself to the cultivation of his intelligence and his emotions, whereas the English actor's intelligence and emotions are lying fallow throughout the long years spent by him in a forlorn endea-

vour to learn the indiscible? Of course there are exceptions among Englishmen. We have a few good English actors. Very few indeed. Most of the good actors on the English stage have some strong taint of foreign blood in their veins. (In "foreign" I include, of course, Jewish blood.) As a general rule, Englishmen cannot act, and they never will act. And as the English stage is, and will always be, mainly filled by Englishmen, it is, and always will be, vastly inferior to the French stage.

You will see now that I have no keen sympathy with the renewed wail for a British Conservatoire. Mr. Carnegie or another may found such an institution, and you may lead the young Englishman down to it, and you may make him drink from it; but what he drinks will certainly be no elixir of histrionic art. Acting cannot be taught. The most that a Conservatoire could do were to give a few tips—how to walk across the stage, how to fence, how not to speak through the nose, how to pronounce out-of-the-way words in Shakespeare's plays, and so forth. But really, I do not think that these benefits would be so important as to justify any one in spending a vast sum to confer them on us. There seem to me so many objects in the world more important and worthier of spare cash than the tuition of superficial deportment to our young mimes. Anyhow, at this distance from my native city, I cannot coax up any enthusiasm for such

tuition. Here I might find myself indifferent to the phantom Conservatoire even if I thought its materialisation would do some real good to English acting. As it is, I dismiss the fad with a sneer. If our English mimes want to improve themselves, let them be born again, of French parents.

"THE WILDERNESS"

April 20, 1901.

THE Garden of Eden being closed to us *sine die*, there must needs be in every human lot some proportion of unhappiness. Also, ours being a fallen nature, some proportion of humbug must needs infect the behaviour of every social class. These proportions of unhappiness and of humbug vary, of course, according to the lot and the class. I am inclined to think that riches are rather a blessing than otherwise—that the rich man (other things being equal) is happier than the pauper. Also, I have a suspicion that the upper class, inasmuch as it frankly makes pleasure its chief aim, and has, moreover, no model but itself, harbours less of hypocrisy than do the classes below it. But then, I am of a philosophic temper, and can detach myself. Most other persons who happen to be not rich, and to be of the middle class, have comfortably convinced themselves that wealth is a burden indeed—an excoriant pack for poor Pilgrim to stagger under; and that "high life," moreover, is a kind of Juggernaut—a horrible, over-riding deity, insatiable of sacrifices of virgin souls. The rich man (these good people are happy to believe) is cut off from all worthy communion with his fellow-

beings. No one loves him. Every one is agog to get at him. He can trust nor man nor woman. Not for him, poor wretch! the hand-clasp of comradeship, not for him the rays of unblemished love from a girl's blue eyes. Against such demonstrations he must steel his heart, for, in his direction, they are all false, false, false. Though he see passing him through the needle's eye a whole procession of camels, himself cannot set foot in even a fool's paradise. Lord Rosebery, with his sure instinct for saying what will give the greatest happiness to the greatest number, recently set his seal on this popular view of the rich man's lot. The whole population exchanged glances. "Hear that?" and "Told you so!" was murmured throughout the gratified Isles. Lord Rosebery, and other capitalists, and a few detached seers of life, were the only people who saw where the real cleverness of the speech came in. I suggest that Lord Rosebery should not let slip the chance of fostering now that other pleasant illusion which I have mentioned—the illusion of general hollowness and unreality in "high life." Let him come down to us and assure us that the atmosphere in which he lives has prevented him from ever being honest and frank (except, of course, on the occasion when he proclaimed the vanity of riches). Let him asseverate that in Society no true self ever comes to the surface; that every one there wears a mask behind whose pink and white surface is a very sallow skin;

and that through those eyelets peep eyes void of lustre, and under those tinselled robes are stomachs unnourished by any fare but Dead Sea fruit. So will he be yet more highly commended of the people. Meanwhile, he has allowed Mr. H. V. Esmond to steal a march on him.

Mr. Esmond, crying in " The Wilderness," has the advantage not only of priority but also (I suspect) of sincerity. He was born into the same social class as I, and, being a sentimental creator rather than a thinker, he has probably accepted as truth that class's view of the class above it. One may assume that he is honestly compassionate of " the upper ten thousand." Also, the fact that he has till lately shown an industry in acting not less than mine in criticism may be taken as proof presumptive that he was not born heir to vast private means. Nor has he yet (though, doubtless, he soon will have) written a great enough number of popular plays like " The Wilderness " to make a capitalist of him. Being, then, a man who does not yet know by experience what it feels like to be really rich, (and being, as aforesaid, a sentimental creator rather than a thinker) he has probably accepted as truth the poor man's theory of wealth. And thus his indictment of wealth and his indictment of fashion have for me the true ring of conviction. If he were making these indictments directly, in his own person, I should not attempt the unpleasant task of disillusioning him. But he makes them

indirectly, through the mouth of a *dramatis persona* who is a young and healthy Baronet with £30,000 a year; and so, as a critic, I find inevitable the duty of exposing to him his fallacy. This young Baronet, as drawn by him, offends my sense of artistic truth. Such a man would not, in real life, be convinced that riches were a curse; nor would he (unless, like Lord Rosebery, he had a motive for ingratiating himself with the public) proclaim them to be a curse. Nor would he find, or profess to find, fashionable life a hollow and tedious mockery. On the contrary, he would take things as he found them, enjoying them all thoroughly. Mr. Clement Scott, the other day, said rather quaintly of some one that "he took his good fortune smiling, like a gentleman." That is what this young Baronet would do. He would know well that if such a man as he had no true friends the fault was his own, not his wealth's fault, and that if he thought the people of his class were but so many sinister automata the fault was in his own stupidity. But the creature of Mr. Esmond's fancy, Sir Harry Milanor, moves through life in a mood of gloomy protest. "There are no wild-flowers," sighs he, "in Bond Street." He has no "friends"—he "might have had friends" but for his horrid, horrid wealth. And every one is oh! so false. Even his own mother is an imposture through which he sees in the twinkling of an eye. In a rather jarring scene with her he asks her to compare herself as she appears

before him and "the world" with herself as she appears when her maid wakes her in the morning. Certainly this "world" is no world for him. It is a void so appalling to him in its desolation that he mixes the metaphor of his very catchword, conjuring his sweetheart to "come out of the wilderness into the light." The topic which the Fat Knight arrives at only on his death-bed is the one topic on which the yearning Baronet can ever discourse without bitterness. On this topic he spreads himself out indeed, insomuch that his "Uncle Jo" rouses in my breast quickly responsive echo when he ejaculates "Look here, young man! If I went out for many of these walks with you, I should do you a mischief." Doubtless, Sir Harry Milanor's incessant prattle about fairy rings and what not is very pretty. But it is not the kind of prettiness of which any grown-up man on the earth would be guilty. From a grown-up man on the stage a very little of it goes (not for the public, I know; but for me) a very long way. For me, it soon degenerates into mere sickly fatuousness. For prettiness—even pretty-prettiness—in the right place I have as great a taste as any one else. But I submit that it is not in its right place when it is uttered by an adult male in a realistic comedy. If Sir Harry Milanor had been otherwise a character which convinced me I should have been much more exasperated by his pretty outbursts than I was. But from the first, for reasons which I have explained, he never convinced

me at all. He seemed to me as flimsy and unreal a phantom as was ever projected for the public's pleasure. Consequently, he spoilt for me the whole play, and disabled me from enjoying much that I perceived to be good in it. But for Sir Harry, I should have taken keen pleasure in the skill with which Mr. Esmond has drawn the character of the heroine. A real character, this—a real creation, sharp and true in all the lights and shades of it; but, in juxtaposition to the unreal hero, a character wasted.

But for Sir Harry, I should have taken keen pleasure in the skill with which Mr. Esmond has developed his story throughout the first two acts, and should have been seriously vexed by the collapse of his skill in the third and last act. But for Sir Harry, I should, in writing this criticism, have perhaps confined myself to praise of the first two acts. As it is, let me skip them, and merely demonstrate why the third is bad. (Indeed, since the rest of the critics seem to have been unanimously praising all three acts, and especially the third, I shall thus make myself more useful to Mr. Esmond than I should otherwise have been.) During the first two acts the story has been evolved naturally from the characters. There have been no dramatic tricks, and all the characters (except, of course, Sir Harry) have been behaving like human beings. But in the third act, apparently, Mr. Esmond discovered that he had not left over enough story to

give the play its regulation length. The situation to which he had brought his characters was easily soluble. But the obvious solution would not fill up the whole of the last act. And so Mr. Esmond faked the probabilities. This he did in two ways. He wrote in a very long scene for the wife and the former lover, making the wife keep the former lover for a long while in the dark, and even lead him on to suppose that she cared for him as much as ever. All that she would have done, but for the exigencies of the stage, is to have told the young man that she now loved her husband, and to have suggested that, unless he gave up the acquaintance altogether, he must purge his mind of any notion of mutual romance. Even worse, because more mechanical, is the other intercalation made by Mr. Esmond. Before the wife confesses the motive she had for marrying, the husband learns, quite unnecessarily, from a miscarried letter the motive to be confessed. Thereupon he pours out his grief to an impossible confidant, imagining that his wife is still indifferent to him, and blaming himself for having ruined her life. Considering that he has been seeing her hourly for some months, his misapprehension is obviously as impossible as his confidant. How Mr. Esmond could have spun out the last act without interfering with the probabilities, it is not my business to suggest. I merely point out that the method chosen by him was a bad one.

A PUZZLE IN LITERARY DRAMA

May 11, 1901.

WHAT, precisely, was Mr. Henley's share in the plays done jointly by Robert Louis Stevenson and himself? This is a baffling problem, meet to be mooted rather in the long Winter evenings than when Spring hovers airily over us to unknit our brows. Nevertheless. . . .

To evaluate, from a work produced by A and B, the share of B, your best way is to proceed by elimination. Analyse the work into its component parts—its matter, method, style, and so forth. Then set aside all that in it might be due to A, as A is known to you through the work done by him single-handed. The residue, presumably, must have been done by B. This presumption becomes a certainty if, referring to any work done by B single-handed, you find that any of it coincides with that part of the joint work which does not seem to have been done by A. You may now, of course, find in the joint work things that could have been done either by A or by B. Some of the things that were A-like may, in the light of B's other work, seem to be equally B-like. For them you must give half-credit to both men. You may, on the other hand, find things that you can attribute neither to A nor

to B. For these, also, you will divide the credit. They are the result of fusion.

Apply this method to the two plays which were performed last week at Her Majesty's, "Macaire" and "Beau Austin." Take "Macaire" first. "A Melodramatic Farce" it is called, though it is rather a farce suddenly transformed, at last, into a melodrama. Stevenson, single-handed, was prolific of both these forms in his books. As examples of his farce we have the immortal "New Arabian Nights;" of his melodrama, "The Pavilion on the Links," "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and the greater part of every romance that he wrote. Therefore there is no reason why he should not have alone conceived the plot of "Macaire." There is (I forestall, unscientifically, the proper working of the process) very good reason to suppose that Mr. Henley did not conceive the plots of the plays written with Stevenson, inasmuch as he has never by himself shown any tendency to story-telling. As critic, as lyric and descriptive poet, he has been active. In fiction he has done nothing. Even if he had, the plot of "Macaire" (as also the plots of "Deacon Brodie" and "Admiral Guinea") would obviously be Stevenson's. No one that has read "A Penny Plain and 2*d.* Coloured"—and who with any love for the art of writing has not read that perfect essay many times?—could for one moment doubt the source of these plots. Out of Stevenson, by Skelt: that is their one possible pedigree. The

horrific scenes and figures that the small boy Stevenson used to cut out from Skelt's pages, and to paste upright, and to manipulate on the stage of his own toy theatre, they are the self-same figures that he projected in his prime. Fondly he remembered " those pages of gesticulating villains, epileptic combats, bosky forests, palaces and war-ships, frowning fortresses and prison vaults," and these horrific plays were not less the obvious outcome of that piety than was " A Penny Plain and 2*d.* Coloured." In plot, then, " Macaire " was his. The choice of Macaire as protagonist is, surely, his also. Not only was Macaire among the figures enumerated by him as being in Skelt's repertory, but the whole conception of Macaire—its difference from the traditional conception—is essentially Stevensonian. This eloquently philosophic scoundrel, this tatterdemalion with transcendental schemes for subjugating his fellows, is too like Stevenson's Villon and Stevenson's Dynamiter not to have sprung fully-equipped from Stevenson's own brain. His companion, too, Bertrand—how could one attribute him to any one but that writer who always so persistently revelled and excelled in delineating a timid nature thrown into perilous affairs ? The passion of fear was the one passion that Stevenson never could keep out of anything he wrote. A score of instances will occur to every reader of him. The rest of the characters are mere supernumeraries. They could have been conceived

by Stevenson or any one else. How about the actual writing of the play? Here, again, one is confronted with the certainty that it is all Stevenson's. "Blessings on that frontier line—the criminal hops across, and lo! the reputable man." The little verb "to hop," and, in opposition to it, the pompous Latinity of "reputable," when "honest" was the so obvious thing to say! That is a trick which only Stevenson's subtly humorous sense for words could have played for us. Again, "your soul is incorporate with your stomach," "I find you all—permit the expression—gravelled," "Where is my long-lost child? produce my young policeman, show me my gallant boy"—who but Stevenson could have made these phrases, which are fair examples of the play's manner throughout? It remains to be wondered whether Stevenson did the technique, the construction, of "Macaire." He might well have done it. It is just what one would expect from an amateur dramatist who did not take the stage at all seriously. The sudden change of key from sheer farce to sheer melodrama, and the monotony and superfluity of much in the opening scenes, smack sharply of the trifling tiro. At the same time, one could not assert surely that they were Stevenson's. Now that we have analysed the play, let us sum up the residue from what Stevenson might have done in it. Lo! there is no residue at all. Stevenson might have done the whole thing out of his own head. Appearances lead one to

believe that he conceived the plot, drew the two important characters, wrote the dialogue. There is, on the other hand, nothing to stamp him surely as drawer of the subsidiary characters or as technical constructor. Thus the present inference from the evidence is that Mr. Henley may have constructed the play and drawn all the characters but Macaire and Bertrand. To test this inference, turn to Mr. Henley's record. He, as I have said, is a critic and a lyric and descriptive poet. Those qualities through which, in the arts of criticism and poetry, he has won his high reputation do not, certainly, obtrude themselves from "Macaire." Much in the play is characteristic of Stevenson, of Mr. Henley nothing. That Mr. Henley may have drawn the subordinate characters is, nevertheless, possible. As I said, any one could have drawn them. Also, being, like Stevenson, an amateur in dramaturgy, he may have been responsible for the construction. Such is the conclusion one draws as to Mr. Henley's share in the play. It is a conclusion not satisfactory to our general admiration of Mr. Henley. However, it is but an interim-conclusion. Mr. Henley, as I shall show, must have done more than what we can give him credit for at first sight.

With "Beau Austin" the case is much the same as with "Macaire." True, this play is a comedy, and comedy was not a form in which Stevenson dealt. At the same time, he, as being a creator in fiction, seems likelier than Mr. Henley to have

conceived the plot of it. Moreover, the character of the Beau himself, round which everything revolves, is as thoroughly Stevensonian as the character of Macaire. It is, indeed, the character of Prince Florizel of Bohemia, realised on a comedic plane. Florizel as foreign potentate in modern London was farcical, but Florizel as dandy on the Pantiles becomes perfectly possible and comedic. That magnificence, that "stately and agreeable demeanour," that infinite span of condescension, become matter for smiles, for tears even, though before they could evoke only one's roars of ecstatic joy. Yes! surely, the Beau is Stevenson's. The paternity of Dorothy Musgrave is dubious. She is a shadow, and Stevenson, as we know, never could draw a woman. But then, the chances are that Mr. Henley, likewise, never could draw a woman. So let the credit for Dorothy Musgrave be divided between the two. Also the credit for the Aunt, the valet, and the other characters, who, though there is no reason to attribute them to Mr. Henley, do not remind one of any characters in Stevenson's books. The construction of the play—not inconsistent like the construction of "Macaire" but timid and frail—may be due to either of the authors. But the writing—again the writing seems authentically, exclusively, Stevenson's. "I am the rejected suitor of this young gentleman's sister, of Miss Musgrave. . . . See in how laughable a manner fate repaid me! The waiting-maid derided: the

mistress denied, and now comes this very ardent champion who insults me." The voice is the voice of Florizel, in all its clear and mellifluous cadences, and there are none of those bristles that might betray to us the prose of Mr. Henley. Mr. Henley's prose-style is admirable, but it is essentially a bristling style. It sprouts, it pricks. It sprouts in uniformly brief sentences, pricks with uniformly sharp "points." It never waves and caresses, as did Stevenson's. The dialogue in "Beau Austin" waves and caresses in the truly Stevensonian mode. I am convinced that Mr. Henley did not write it. So far, then, the inference we have come to is that in "Beau Austin" Mr. Henley may have drawn Dorothy and the other minor characters, may have done the construction, and may, improbably, have conceived the main idea of the story, and that Stevenson did the rest. Again the conclusion leaves something to be desired by us admirers of Mr. Henley. Let me try to supply that something.

There must be some fallacy in the evidence from which we deduce that Mr. Henley played so small a part in the collaboration. If he had not played a part greater than it appears, the collaboration would have been a farcical affair, and Mr. Henley never would have allowed his name to be tacked on to plays with which he had had practically nothing to do. Can we reconcile the difference between what seems and what must have been? "Dexterously, good madonna." Mr. Henley, brought into contact

with Stevenson, was so affected by the fascinating personality of his companion that he lost his own identity, and became Stevenson, thought like Stevenson, felt like Stevenson, imagined like Stevenson, wrote—no, I cannot believe that any of the script was his. Stevenson wrote the plays, and Mr. Henley, to balance the collaboration, invented them. In the other collaborated works of Stevenson we do not wonder at our difficulty in determining what he did not do. Reading "The Dynamiter," we remember that the cleverness of all wives is soon assimilated to the cleverness of their husbands. Reading "The Wreckers," we easily extend this rule to clever step-sons. But that a material so definite, so tough, so trenchant as the mind of Mr. Henley should ever have been transformed by any one, is certainly, as the journalists say, "matter for no small surprise." It implies an elasticity of which we never should have suspected Mr. Henley, and for which we admire him all the more. And it is unique testimony to the glamour of "R. L. S."

THE TAME EAGLET

June 15, 1901.

THERE are they who would encore eternity. Some of these folk, I make no doubt, were at the first night of "L'Aiglon", and felt, when the thing ceased, that they had been spending a very happy four — five — five hundred-and-five — how many hours, by-the-by, *was* it? Would that I could classify myself among these happy inexhaustibles! But I cannot; nor (it comforts me to believe) could the vast majority of my fellow-first-nighters and of them who have seen the play since its production. You call us insular? We hang our heads, pleading in extenuation that we live on an island. Were we Frenchmen, probably we should enjoy "L'Aiglon" very much. For this probability there are two reasons. Firstly, Frenchmen can listen with pleasure to reams of rhetoric in theatres. If the rhetoric be good in itself, they care not at all whether it be or be not dramatically to the point. Secondly, Frenchmen have an enthusiastic cult for Napoleon. Now, "L'Aiglon" is composed chiefly of reams of excellent but irrelevant rhetoric about Napoleon, and reams of details about him. Little wonder, then, that Paris took kindly to it. But how should London follow suit?

Unless it be dramatic, rhetoric, however good, bores us: such is our fallen nature. Moreover, Napoleon is our fallen foe. Time was when we were frightened of him. Naughty children expected him momently to appear down the chimney. Good grown-up people expected him momently to appear off Dover. But these fears never were fulfilled. We laugh at them now. We feel nothing but a mild pity for the inspirer of them, who, having duly succumbed to the superior genius of "the Dook," was not (it seems) made so comfortable as we could have afforded to make him, in the flush of our conquest, at St. Helena. A live dog being more formidable than a dead lion, we (though, as Englishmen, we will not admit that there was anything leonine about Napoleon) are inclined to be less afraid of Napoleon than of General Mercier. But General Mercier does not (to use one of our favourite phrases) loom large enough to interest us in any five-act play that might be written in his honour. How much less so *le petit caporal*!

On us, then, M. Rostand's main appeal is wasted. Take away from us the capacity for Napoleon-worship, and what remains of "L'Aiglon"? Everything, according to the author, who exclaims, prefatorily, "Grand Dieu! ce n'est pas une cause Que j'attaque ou que je défends. . . . Et ceci n'est pas autre chose Que l'histoire d'un pauvre enfant". But that is only pretty Fanny's way of stopping Marianne's mouth. "L'Aiglon" is obviously a

pæan composed to the greater glory of Napoleon. The "poor child" is but the excuse for it. In France he is taken as such, the audience concentrating its sentiment, duly, on his father. But in England he becomes, actually and indeed, the central figure—the one point of interest. And he is not a large enough figure, not interesting enough, to make the play "go." If M. Rostand had simply come to London, and, rising after the public banquet which we should have organised for the author of "Cyrano," had exclaimed "Gentlemen, three tears for the Duc de Reichstadt!" we should have shed three times three there and then, and sung "For he's a poor little fellow" with the utmost heartiness. This eaglet does cut a very pathetic little figure in history. We know that it was not his fault that he was the son of his wicked father: it was his misfortune, and we blame him not at all for it. We pity him even as we pity any one else who, being the son of an eminent person, has the wish but not the power to distinguish himself in the same line. We have had, and still have, many such eaglets in our own country. On the bushes of St. Stephen's, of the Law Courts, and of other public resorts, they perch by the score. They are tame. They feed from our hands. Our hearts go out to them as they flutter round us. But our hearts do not go out to the extent that is covered by five interminably long acts in Alexandrines. We must draw the line somewhere. We must

draw it at M. Rostand's latest achievement. "Tame eaglet: tame play" is our inevitable verdict.

Big plays must have themes proportionately big; and, since for us the little Duc is not merely the ostensible theme but also the actual theme, "L'Aiglon" wearies us beyond measure. Had M. Rostand curtailed his play by (say) one half, we could delight in it. In a play written to last from (say) nine to eleven o'clock, the little Duc, so tenderly delineated by M. Rostand (yes! the excuse has been concocted very elaborately), would throughout hold our sympathies. But from eight o'clock to midnight! In a play of such vast structure, with a cast of more than fifty persons! The little Duc fades, evaporates, under such tremendous pressure. He becomes simply a little bore, whose oxymoronically belated-premature death we hail (if we have not already hailed a hansom and been driven home to well-earned rest) as a merciful release for all concerned in his brief-inordinate life. "Mountains in labour" is no adequate description of this play. The phrase suggests, at any rate, suspense. *Nascetur ridiculus mus*, but how are we to know that? Though, when this creature is born, we may feel that we have been fooled, we have had, at any rate, the pleasure of being on tenter-hooks for something colossal in scale. But when, from the very outset, we see the ridiculous mouse running healthily about, with a background of maternal mountain-peaks gazing proudly down on it, we, with

the best will in the world, can neither bless its pretty little heart nor admire the scenery. To the pretty little heart of M. Rostand's Duc we are quite indifferent by reason of the enormous circumstances in which it is shown to us. To M. Rostand's technical skill in handling enormous circumstances we are quite indifferent because there is no reason why they should be handled here at all. No reason, that is, so far as we English are concerned. If only we were Frenchmen! As we are not, our best plan were simply to read the play and not see it acted. In the study we are more patient than in the theatre: we measure time less jealously; besides, we can "skip." Remember, too, that crowds and "sets" and "properties" when they are merely imagined are much less overwhelming than when they are seen. Let us read the two hundred-and-fifty pages of "L'Aiglon" by all means. From five acts of him Heaven defend us!

It were no disaster not to have seen Mme. Bernhardt as the Duc. Of course, her performance is very brilliant: that is a mere postulate. It is also wonderful as a feat of endurance. I admit, too, that she, of all living mimes, seems born to interpret Rostand. Her luxuriance and flamboyance in acting are precisely analogous to his in dramaturgy. As Mr. Arthur Symons has wittily and unkindly said, M. Rostand appeals to the public as a millionaire appeals to Society; and the remark might have been made with equal truth of

Mme. Bernhardt. Nevertheless, this impersonation of the Duc is a mistake, a thing to be forgotten quickly and forgiven at leisure. The trouble is not that Mme. Bernhardt looks too old : on the contrary, her youthfulness is astounding. Nor is the trouble merely that to students of history she does not look like any known miniature of the Duc de Reichstadt, and does look like every known photograph of Miss Nellie Farren as "Little Jack Shepherd." The trouble is that to every one she looks like a woman, walks like one, talks like one, *is* one. That primary fact upsets the whole effort, mars all illusion. As the part would be tedious even if it were played by a man, I may seem captious in grumbling that it is played by a woman. My displeasure, however, is not that the eaglet is played by Mme. Bernhardt, but that she plays the eaglet.

ALMOND BLOSSOM IN PICCADILLY CIRCUS

June 22, 1901.

Our own almond-trees have duly shed their blossoms, to be blown out of sight by the blasts of our own spring. But, just where we should least hope to find it, an exotic specimen has been planted, and blooms there fairer and more fragrant, assuredly, than any native growth. There, in Piccadilly Circus, where the chaotic shoddiness of modern civilisation expresses itself most perfectly; there, in that giddy congestion of omnibuses, advertisements, glossy restaurants and glossier drinking-bars, glossy men and glossier women; there, in that immediate inferno of ours, this gracious almond-tree is in flower. Let us tend it lovingly. Let us make the most of its brief season —the brief "season" for which the players from the Imperial Court Theatre of Tokio have leased the Criterion.

There seems to be something appropriate in the coming of these players to the very centre of our vulgarity. For have not we, in our greedy occidental way, made a very great point of vulgarising down to our own level the notion of Japan? The importation of a few fans and umbrellas and idols

set us all agog. Forthwith Brummagem could not turn out a big enough supply of cheap and nasty imitations to keep us happy. The trade began about twenty years ago, waxing ever faster and more furious. "Japanese Stores" sprang up on every side. Japanese musical comedies were produced. "Jolly Japs" peddled around and about. Now at length we have had our surfeit. We are eager to vulgarise some other national art. And lo! suddenly in the midst of us, appear these players from Tokio, to remind us how much nicer the real thing is, and to warn us against making any more such spurious imitations as those which we have made of them. Their warning is likely to be the more effective through the shock which their presence gives us. In the fulness of our national pride, we had believed that the old Japan was no more. We had flattered ourselves that the Japanese were now as vulgar and occidental as we. And yet here, classic and unperturbed, untouched by time or by us, these players stand before us, as though incarnate from the conventions of Utamaro and Hokusai.

Straight from the prints and drawings of Utamaro and Hokusai these creatures have come to us. Those terrific men, bristling with hair, and undulating all over with muscle and showing their teeth in fixed grins; those pretty little ladies, with their little sick smiles, drooping this way or that as though the weight of their great sleek head-dresses

were too much for them—here they all are, not outlined on flimsy paper, but alive and mobile in the glory of three dimensions. Here they all are, magically restored to the very flesh in which the limners saw them. See! Two of the men have drawn their broadswords and are planting their feet far apart in the classical attitude that one knows so well. They are grunting, snorting, gnashing their teeth. They are athirst for each other's blood, both loving Katsuragi, the Geisha (whom, by the way, they do *not* call the jewel of Asia). The swords clash noisily, and sparks fly from them. The grins and the grunts become more and more terrible, as the combatants stamp round and round. And she, the cause of the combat, sways this way and that, distracted, yet with a kind of weary composure on her face and in every fold of her red kimono, watching for the moment when she can throw herself between, to separate and soothe and save them. Whether she succeed or fail we care not. Merely are we entranced by the sight of her, by the realisation of the dreams that the colour-prints wove for us. Again, when her lover has deserted her and to escape her vengeance has hidden himself within a Buddhist monastery, we care not whether by her dancing she shall persuade the monks to admit her within their gates. She dances, and that is enough for us. She divests herself of her kimono. Swathed and rigid, she averts herself from us. Faint, monoto-

nous music is heard, and a crooning voice. Gradually she turns towards us. Her left hand is across her mouth, in her right hand she holds aloft her shut fan. The music is insistent. Still she stands motionless. Suddenly, with a sharp downward fling of the arm she shoots open her fan. The left hand flutters upon the air. She sways, droops forward, and sidles into her dance—a dance of long soft strides, indescribable. Presently she sinks on her knees under an almond-tree, and claps the palms of her hands delicately. Down from the branch falls a light shower of petals. These she sweeps together, imprisons them between her hands, runs away with them, scatters them from her, and, always in some mysterious accord to that mysterious music, chases them round and round.

Some symbolism there is, doubtless, in these evolutions. For us the grace of the kitten suffices. Anon, she does another dance, wearing on her head a hat that is like a pink plate and is tied with a pink riband across her lips. Anon, she is beating a tiny drum as she dances. See with what strange movements of her arms she waves the tiny drumsticks ! She is never still, and yet her every gesture imprints itself on our gaze as though it were the one arrested gesture of a figure in a picture. Nothing is blurred by mobility. Nothing escapes us. It is as though one were not seeing actual life in unrest, but inspecting at leisure a whole series of those instantaneous plates which are contained in a

cinematograph, and wondering at the strange secrets revealed in them—those movements which are impalpable and unsuspected because only within the fraction of a second can they be caught. And yet, though we see everything thus separate, we see it also in its general relation to the rest. Though we see those quaintly exquisite postures and gestures which the limners recorded for us, we see also how they were made, and what——no ! what they expressed remains for us a mystery. We, who do not even know the Japanese language, how should we penetrate the mysteries of the Japanese spirit ? We, to whom all these men and women look respectively (and delightfully) just like one another, how, in the name of goodness, are we to know what their souls are driving at ?

True, " arguments " of the two plays performed at the Criterion are duly included in the programme. Thus one knows roughly what is going on. One knows that one person is jealous, another frightened, another pleased, and so forth. And, as I have suggested, one doesn't care. So differently are the emotions expressed in Japan that illusion is completely merged for us in curiosity. When an Englishman is indignant because the mother of his betrothed has given her in marriage to another man, he expresses himself ebulliently. Yet when Yendo Morito meets Koromogawa, the mother of Kesa, and learns from her how badly he has been treated, he merely grunts and snarls. That (in the light of

the argument) is his way of expressing anguish and rage. Naturally, we are more interested in the situation than touched by it. When he draws his sword and bids Koromogawa prepare for instant death, she does not, as would an Englishwoman, scream or kneel or try to run away; on the contrary, she remains perfectly still, rolls her eyes and grunts.

Such is the form that fear takes in Japan. Again, our sympathy is unaroused, tightly though our attention is held. Such is our experience of every climax in the play. We understand it, from the argument; but we cannot feel it. And between every climax is a long interval, which the argument does but very faintly illuminate. In these intervals we see the figures moving, gesticulating; we hear quaint sounds made by them. The hands wave and the lips curve and the arched eyebrows move up and down and the bodies sway to and fro and everything of course means something, but nothing reveals a hint to us. And we, if we are wise, do not try to penetrate the veil. We do not try to think: we merely look on. For sheer visual delight, nothing can match this curious performance. All who have eyes to see should see it. The one fault to be found with it is that the figures are seen against very elaborate and gaudily-painted backgrounds. Plain, pale backgrounds were needed to make them "tell" worthily of their own quaint perfection.

INCOMPARABLES COMPARED

June 29, 1901.

In the art of acting, obviously, the personality of the artist is more important than in any other art. To excel in any art postulates an excellent personality; but in literature, or painting, or sculpture, or musical composition, the personality of the artist lurks in the background, to be divined by us merely through the work, whereas in acting the personality (itself being the artistic medium) is equally and simultaneously visible with the work achieved through it. When we are told of a great writer whom we have never read, our impulse is to ask for a description of his work: what is its subject-matter, style, method? But, when we are told of a great actor whom we have not seen, our first question is "What kind of a man is he?" Having heard whether he be tall or short, Jew or Gentile, robust or ethereal, and what kind of a voice he has, we ask for details about his artistic skill. To know what kind of a man he seems is necessary before we can imagine the effect his acting would produce on us. For, be he never so objective, an actor cannot elude himself; at least, no great actor can. The great actor must have a great personality, and that personality is the starting-point for every-

thing. Impersonate he never so wisely, he cannot much discount it. He may try to sink it utterly into his part, but only to a slight extent can he succeed in doing so. Often the great actor makes no such attempt: he tries merely to absorb the part into himself—to reveal himself through it. Thus on the stage there is frequently a contradiction between good art and great art, and the two things have a difference in kind, and not merely, as elsewhere, in degree. The great actors are never the good actors. They cannot, even when they do try to, merge themselves. Neither great nor small actresses ever try to. Any attempt to disguise her face or voice would precipitate an actress into the grotesque. She may play tragedy one night, and comedy the next, and be equally fine in both; but in both she will be frankly the same woman, seen from different angles of herself. (The most we can hope is that she will not, like Duse, be visible from only one angle, having only one angle to be visible from.) And thus, in the case of a great actress even more surely than in the case of a great actor, the first question must be "What manner of woman is she?" If the great actress be a foreigner, you may even forget to ask subsequently for details of her art. In a foreign language which you do not understand you cannot appreciate the *nuances* of the acting. In a foreign language which you do understand you cannot (unless you know the language as perfectly as

you know your own) appreciate so well the art of acting as in your own language. But, though so much of this art loses its savour in crossing frontiers or seas, a woman's personality is equally impressive everywhere—more impressive perhaps (as I shall suggest) away from her own land than in it. Thus especially in the case of those exotic actresses who come annually hither, in more or less force, to gladden summer, we are occupied with what they are rather than with what they do or how they do it. What is the secret of Sarah's appeal to us? Why do our hearts go out to Sada Yacco? Why is Réjane enchanting?

If I, Paris-like, were called on to decide which of these three goddesses was most admirable, the apple would (I think) be adjudicated to Sada Yacco. But there would be a long, embarrassed pause before the award, and after it I should beg the empty-handed couple not to treat it too seriously, it being merely impressionistic, and in no sense judicial. "This lady from Tokio," I should insinuate, "may not be nearly so gifted as either of you who come from the city named after me. She may be reckoned by her compatriots as positively plain, positively clumsy and quite unintelligent. In point of her art she may be accounted 'a stick.' But for me, an occidental, a simple shepherd on Mount Ida, somehow she surpasses both of you. It is, doubtless, because she is so remote from my understanding—because

her face is a mere inscrutable oval, and her gestures have for me no meaning, and to her gait I know no parallel—that I (deeming fair her face, and fair her gait and gestures), have set her thus above you. She is new to me, and you (daughters of the Latin race) know the tag 'quidquid novi.' She is mysterious to me, and 'omne ignotum' you remember. And now, excuse me, I must herd my sheep, which have strayed sadly during this arbitrage." So, bowing inclusively as I shouldered my crook, I should away to my work. But perhaps, ere I had taken many steps down the mountain-side, I should hesitate, halt, look round, and, as a rider to my judgment, bid Sada Yacco let Réjane and Sarah take each a bite of the apple—Réjane, a big bite; Sarah, a small one.

For both those Parisians I have a strongly sentimental admiration. Both are delightful. Sarah, however, delights me now much less than of yore, much less than Réjane delights me. I said just now that no actress ever tried to disguise herself. I was forgetting Sarah. She does try, and the result is (as I said it must inevitably be) ludicrous. As L'Aiglon and other young men, she loses herself, but becomes no one else: she becomes merely a coruscating *thing*. The feat is amazing, but it is not serious art: it is showmanship, or (one needs a monstrous word for it) showwomanmanship. Soon, it seems, we are to inspect her as Romeo. Why not (while she is about it) as Romeo *and* Juliet?

INCOMPARABLES COMPARED

Some years ago I found in a music hall an "artiste" made up as Faust on one side and Marguerite on the other singing "Notte d'Amor" in alternate voice and profile. If Sarah had seen him, I am sure she would have taken the hint. Perhaps she will take it now. The more absurd her absurdities become, the better shall I be pleased, for the sooner will she, sick of them, revert to her art and to herself. Her own fascinating self—that is what I miss most keenly. And it is because soon I shall be seeing it again in "Phèdre," and in other parts within its range, that I should so far relent as to allow Sarah that small bite of the awarded apple. It is because Réjane is, duly and consistently, herself, that she would have the privilege of that far bigger bite. Do not mistake my tone for one of patronage. I do not expect her, who is a goddess, to descend upon Mount Ida for my approval. It is I who have been climbing Notting Hill to behold her and kneel to her in the little theatre that caps that windy peak.

But "goddess" is not an appropriate word for her. She excels in virtue of seeming so essentially a mortal woman. Her rareness is not in any peculiarity, but in displaying on the stage, to a supreme degree, every peculiarity of her sex. She sums up in herself her whole sex, with all its typical qualities, good and bad. Sarah—I mean, of course, Sarah proper—might be, aptly enough, called "goddess," inasmuch as she is quite unlike any

other woman. Her voice and her face, her repose and her unrest, her expressions of love or hatred, of despair or gaiety or what you will—none of them ever recalls to you anything else of the kind. Generically feminine and specifically Parisian though she is, she has always a kind of lurid supernaturalness. And, for me, this quality gives her something of that mystery which involves Sada Yacco. Thus, in the tripos of fascination, I should class Sarah proper above Réjane, who has not a smile nor a spread of the hand nor a toss of the head that is not instantly typical of her sex at large. Of course, there is no woman resembling Réjane. It is she who resembles the whole lot of them put together. She is a unique synthesis. That is the secret of *her* charm.

Considering them strictly as actresses, not merely as women on the stage, one finds not a pin to choose between Sarah and Réjane. Each is equally perfect mistress of her art. Each can use it with equal sureness as medium of self-expression. Creatures so different need, of course, different kinds of drama, and, just as Sarah needs a romance or a classic tragedy, so must Réjane have a play of modern realism. "Sapho," "Ma Cousine," "La Course du Flambeau," "La Parisienne"—it matters little in which you see her. In all of them she is at her very best. In all of them she is Réjane, incarnate woman, seen from one angle or another. She being so, it matters little whether the play you happen to

see be good or bad—whether it be an amusing satire, like "La Parisienne," or a "Zaza" down from date, like "Sapho." Réjane, not the play, is "the thing." See her in all her plays. Climb Notting Hill nightly, to see her from all angles and to study all her art. You will not grudge the hardness of the ascent. The air is exhilarating up there, and enthusiasm comes all the more easily by reason of a slight dizziness.

MR. PINERO PROGRESSES

September 28, 1901.

During the off-season, it seems, Mr. William Archer has not been idle. He has been practising the delicious functions of a private detective, and, with the luck of the novice, has made a most sensational discovery. Scotland Yard looks silly, and the myrmidons of Slater hide their diminished heads, while the novice, flushed with triumph, tells us of a dastardly plot against the art of Mr. Pinero. There exists in our midst "a little knot of critics whose chief glory and accomplishment is to despise Mr. Pinero . . . anti-Pineroites," who are going to make "assaults" on "Iris." I applaud Mr. Archer's enterprise. I am touched by his anxiety to save, with these preliminary cracks of the whip, his darling from the dogs. But where are the dogs? Those quivering nostrils, those gleaming fangs, those taut tails—where are they all? In a mare's nest, surely. Mr. George Moore, it is true, did not like Mr. Pinero's work. Nor did Mr. Shaw. But neither of those two delightful Irishmen is engaged now in dramatic criticism. To the best of my belief, Mr. Walkley, Mr. Symons and I are the only current dramatic critics who have shown any reluctance to acclaim Mr. Pinero as a builder of

masterpieces. And none of us, I am sure, rejoices in this churlishness. None of us lies in wait to make "assaults" on Mr. Pinero's latest plays. Rather do we hope to share the raptures of our brethren. In the case of "Iris" this hope has been, for me, partially fulfilled. I admire the play very much indeed.

According to Mr. Archer, any one who denies to Mr. Pinero "the quality of genius" must be "the victim of a paralysing prejudice." If that is true, mine is a clear case of paralysis. But possibly my reluctance to hail Mr. Pinero as a genius may be due to a laudably nice sense of words—a sense which is not to be deflected by the electric atmosphere of a successful first-night. If Mr. Pinero is a genius, what are we to call Ibsen, for example? "Genius" seems to me a term which must be reserved for men who are distinguished by some great force of originality, men who bring into the world, out of their own souls, something that the world has not known before. Such a definition of genius may be faulty. Genius is a thing that can hardly be summed up in words. But, even as Mr. John Morley knows a Jingo when he sees one, so do I know a man of genius. I never read or saw any one of Ibsen's plays without feeling that Ibsen was a genius (however limited and unlovely his genius may have appeared to me). I never read or saw a play of Mr. Pinero's without admiring his skill; but genius I never scented there. Ibsen I scented

there, and Tom Robertson and Thackeray and many other influences; but Mr. Pinero himself never leapt forth to impress me. He ever seemed to me a catholic adapter of other men's discoveries; one who sympathetically observed life through other men's eyes, and told us very cleverly as much as he dared tell us of what he had seen. That he is a born playwright I have never denied. But artistry, though it is essential, is not all-sufficient in art. It is but the means of expression. One is concerned also with the quality of what is expressed. What did Mr. Pinero express in "Mrs. Tanqueray," "Mrs. Ebbsmith" and his other serious plays? Nothing that other men had not expressed before him. He went nearer to seriousness than any other Englishman had gone in writing for the stage. That was all. And when you penetrated beneath the superficial boldness you found a timid conventionality; beneath the superficial sincerity, cunning substitutions of stage-tricks for human character. Those plays were little more, really, than good entertainments. Like them, "Iris" is a thoroughly good entertainment. You may always rely on Mr. Pinero to hold your attention, to keep you excited in his story. You may rely, in fact, on good craftsmanship. What you cannot rely on is intellectual honesty, intellectual originality. It is because "Iris" seems to me more honest and more truly observed than any other of Mr. Pinero's plays, because in it life is less faked to yield theatrical

effect, or to soothe the average burgess, that I have headed this article with a compliment to the author.

Drama of the best type is that in which the situations are evolved from, not imposed on, the conflicting characters. "Iris" answers to this test much more nearly than any previous play of Mr. Pinero. The characters have been well realised from the outset, and are, except at certain points, allowed to act consistently with themselves. Their inconsistencies are of that consistent kind which . . . no! I will spare the overdone reference. I hope that by laying stress on the few points at which Mr. Pinero, in my opinion, has strayed into theatricalism, I shall not incur the charge of "paralysing prejudice." My motive is merely to spur Mr. Pinero to still deeper self-respect in his future work. The first point at which he yields to temptation is when Iris refuses to go with Laurence Trenwith to the colonies. The antecedent circumstances are these. Iris is a rich widow who must sacrifice her fortune if she marry again. She loathes the idea of poverty as deeply as she loves Trenwith. Therefore Trenwith must go and make money before she will join him. On the eve of his departure she learns that all her money has been embezzled and that she is as poor as her lover. Trenwith urges her to come and be poor with him. "No," she says, "I must stay behind. I must go through a period of probation." She has a long and ingenious series of arguments to prove that she

must not accompany him. But we know that in real life she would not have used them, would have merely told her maid to pack her boxes. We know that she is only repeating, like a parrot, what Mr. Pinero has taught her to say. If she did not stay behind, poor Mr. Pinero would have to sacrifice practically the whole of his play. So here she remains, fallen far in our estimation of her as a human being. Again, (limited space, or laziness, compels me to write on the assumption that my readers know the outlines of the play) she would not have accepted the millionaire's cheque-book with such alacrity after her lover's departure. In course of time, no doubt, she would have drifted into that acceptance. Mr. Pinero should have given her a respite. His introduction of a young girl whom Iris is eager to help out of financial difficulties is ingenious, but it is not convincing. Even if Iris, in real life, would have used the cheque-book for that girl's sake, we know that in real life that girl would not have entered thus in the nick of time. Her entry is a stage-trick, unworthy of the play. Again, consider the conduct of Trenwith when, returning love-sick from the colonies and finding Iris under the protection of the millionaire, he refuses to take her away with him. In real life, Trenwith would either have forgotten Iris after his three years' absence, and would not have returned to claim her, or, coming back and finding her, he would have forgiven her everything. That he loved

her, and that she loved him, and that she was unhappy, would have been (unless he was a hopeless prig, as Mr. Pinero does not suggest) the only considerations to sway him. Here Mr. Pinero has made a concession of truth to conventional morality. He did not dare to let an "erring" woman end happily. The stalls, even the pit, might have forgiven him, but the dress-circle never. There is another point at which I suspect Mr. Pinero of inartistic timidity. I mean the scene of the first parting between Iris and Trenwith. As written, it is quite otiose. It takes place in Iris' room, where the lovers have been sitting up throughout the night to see the last of each other. The dawn breaks, the moment comes for Trenwith's departure. Certainly the scene is a beautiful one; very true and pathetic is the way in which, at the last moment, the two lovers stand making little feeble jokes, awkwardly, unable to find words for grief. But the scene is not necessary to the play, develops nothing, reveals nothing essential. Mr. Pinero is too sound a craftsman, surely, to have conceived it thus. If the lovers had been behaving more in the manner of Romeo and Juliet, it would have point. It would materially increase the poignancy of the subsequent drama. And I suggest that Mr. Pinero must have conceived it thus, but then had not the courage to execute it. However, this is merely speculation from internal evidence, and it is the last of the objections I have to make to Mr. Pinero's drama as drama.

The rest of my strictures are but against the actual writing of the play. It seems to me the worst-written of all Mr. Pinero's plays. In an unlucky moment, years ago, some rash creature hazarded the opinion that Mr. Pinero wrote well. Since that time, the dramatic critics (who, as a class, have as little sense for literature as is possible in human bipeds) have with one accord been prating of Mr. Pinero's " polished diction " and his " literary flavour " and so forth. The consequence is that Mr. Pinero, elated, has been going from bad to worse, using longer and longer words, and more and more stilted constructions, under the impression that he was becoming more and more literary. In " Iris " he has horribly surpassed himself. Not one of his characters but talks as a leader-writer for a small provincial newspaper writes. When the millionaire in the play makes a speech in honour of Trenwith's departure, one or two of the other characters object to the pomposity of his language. Why ? They themselves use exactly the same vocabulary even in ordinary converse—nay ! sometimes even in moments of utmost agitation. Trenwith himself, bidding farewell to a friend of his *fiancée*, exclaims " I shall always think of you—it will be a consolation for me to do so—as being at Iris' side." Iris dilates gaily on the advantage of having " a fashionable solicitor—*one whose practice is rooted in the gay parterres of Society* " ! The *ingénue*, glad to have been asked to a dinner-party,

murmurs " It was so sweet of you to *include* me ! " Looking at the view from a window, she exclaims, " Oh, I could gaze at this *prospect* for ever, Aunt ! " " Shall I *assist* you ? " says a smart woman to a man who is taking off his overcoat. " You *resemble* the pictures of angels," cries Trenwith gazing into the eyes of his beloved. " *I fear* " and " *I surmise* " are frequently placed (between commas, too) in the mouths of Mr. Pinero's unhappy interpreters. I do solemnly assure Mr. Pinero that these tricks are not " literary." Even if they were, they would be inappropriate to a modern realistic play. By all means let us have literary graces (if we can get any playwright to supply them) in artificial comedy or in romance. But in modern realism the only proper " style " is that which catches the manner of modern human beings in conversation. If that style is beyond Mr. Pinero's range, he ought to have his future MSS. completely rewritten by some one within whose range it happens to be.

After all, though, how the characters in a play talk is much less important than how they feel and act. In " Iris," I repeat, Mr. Pinero has made his characters feel and act more convincingly than in any other of his plays. When all has been said, " Iris " remains a fine play, a work worthy of its author's great talent for play-writing. Mr. Pinero has progressed. And (though Mr. Archer may not believe me) I am glad accordingly.

A MEANS OF GRACE FOR THE DRAMA

October 5, 1901.

CURSORILY, some time ago, I suggested that theatres ought to be opened, and plays enacted, in the morning, not in the evening. Were I a public speaker, this suggestion would doubtless have been punctuated by the reporter with "(*a laugh*)." Being merely a writer, I have not even the solace of knowing that it amused any one. It certainly did nothing more. Yet it deserved very serious discussion. For, were it carried out, we should soon have something very like a respectable national drama.

No unbiassed person will contend that we have anything like that at present. Serious plays draw the public only when they are supposed to be "risky." Prosperity bends her beaming face down on the music halls and on the theatres devoted to musical comedy, and the overflow from these places of delight finds its way either to such farces as "Why Jones Left Home," or to such sentimental comedies as "When We Were Twenty-One"—farces that are to art as practical jokes are to wit, sentimental comedies that are to art as the mingled sobs and chuckles of a man ejected from a public-house are to true tears and laughter. Why does

the public thus neglect dramatic art? Not, as the dilettanti tell us, because there is no dramatic art for it to neglect. We have several dramatists who show themselves capable of doing fine work, and who occasionally do it. But the public does not encourage them, unless it suspects them of trying to undermine its morals. In France, in Germany, such artists would have their reward, immediately and constantly. Why not in England? The obvious answer is that England is not an artistic nation; and the answer is true, so far as it goes. We are a nation of practical men, whose genius is commercial. It is said by many experts (whether truly or not I cannot judge) that as "shopkeepers" we are falling off, growing rusty and letting other nations get ahead of us. But nobody ever attributes to us any attempt to compensate ourselves for diminishing prosperity by becoming artistic. Art and great commercial success seldom thrive together in one nation, and it is probable that in Germany dramatic art will be less encouraged proportionately as her citizens grow richer and richer. In time her drama will sink to the level of ours. But, instead of waiting placidly for that time, might we not make, meanwhile, a spirited effort to put our drama on a level with hers? We need not fear that this would be a forlorn hope. "Not an artistic nation" means, not a nation incapable of artistic emotion, but a nation whose capacity for such emotion is not spontaneous.

There are ways of choking such capacity, and ways of fostering it. The surest way to choke it in regard to drama is to fix the time for playgoing after sunset—that is, after dinner or after high-tea, as the case may be. The surest way of fostering it would be to fix that time in the early morning—to make breakfast the preliminary tonic to drama, and lunch, as supper is now, the anodyne.

At present, we have to playgo either in the evening or in the afternoon. Neither time is propitious. In either of them the most artistic creature is not truly fit to cope with art; how much less so, the average Englishman! The morning always has been recognised as the time when the functions of the brain and the heart are best performed. In the morning all our faculties are agog. We are fresh from sleep. We come into the sordid world purged by our repose from it, with all that in us is divine and elemental restored to us, ascendant in us, for a little while. Our hearts, so slack when we went to sleep, slack from the thrumming fingers of day, are tight-strung again now. A touch makes them vibrant. Solemn or enchanting chords quiver from them. In fact, we can feel finely. And, just as our emotions are in proper trim, so are our brains. We cerebrate clearly, cleanly, assimilating facts, detecting fallacies, at a glance. We are as receptive as tiny children, yet, unlike them, able to reason from our learning. Like the shining day itself, we are young. In the

afternoon, like the day, we are middle-aged already. The dust and dirt of actual life cling about us. We are tired, disillusioned, sedentary, looking back wistfully at the mistakes we have made, wishing, with I know not what of bitterness in our hearts, that we could live our lost morning over again. For after lunch we cannot originate. We are still in possession of all our faculties, but we cannot make them do for us anything new. In a word, we are middle-aged. As the sun westers we become old men, and as it sinks we die. At dinner-time we are born again. But the new life that dinner gives us is a horribly inferior article in comparison with that new life which is the gift of generous sleep. A jolly life, if you will, yet hectic, treacherous, and, in its essence, gross. The glow of meats and wines and artificial lights recreate you after the lassitude produced by your day's work. They make a man of you. But what kind of a man? Emotionally, a sensualist, and a sentimentalist, too. Intellectually, a windbag. You have the capacity for feeling, but only the grosser, with the sillier, human emotions find entry, coming in their grossest and silliest forms. You have (I address, of course, the average reader) the capacity for thinking, but you think only in rough outlines and gaudy tones. You exaggerate, loquaciously. Your tongue runs away with you, and you enjoy the sensation. You enjoy the sound of your own voice. You are impatient of other voices, for you wish to give forth what is in

you, and have no room to take in what comes from any one else, dinner having robbed your brain of all its receptivity. It is in this aggressive, irreceptive mood of the brain, and in that gross mood of the heart, that you do habitually go to the play. What is the kind of play likeliest to satisfy such a spirit? The kind of play that makes no demands whatever on your intellect, while it appeals through false pathos to your sentimentalism, or through horse-play to your high spirits, or to your sensuality through a pretty chorus dancing to the sound of cheery little tunes. No wonder, then, since the managers of our theatres are mostly wise in their generation, that drama, as an art-form, does not thrive among us. In France, in Germany, it thrives, despite evening performances, because the French and the Germans are naturally artistic, and can, even after dinner, more or less apprehend and appreciate fine art. But it would thrive there far more fully if plays were acted in the morning, for the morning is the time when all human beings think and feel to the utmost of their capacity. Even as for transaction of important business, or for solemn rites of religion, the morning is everywhere recognised as the proper time, because the requisite qualities of brain or heart are then untainted, so should the morning be recognised as also the ideal time for playgoing. Perhaps you have never seen a play performed in the morning. I happen to have seen many plays rehearsed so.

And I assure you that I have always appreciated them—their goodness or their badness—far more keenly than when I have seen them, later, in the usual way. Draw on your own experience in other arts. You may once have heard, early in the morning, some fine familiar piece of music, and been thrilled by it with a thrill that it had never given you before, and have wondered, when next you heard it at some concert in afternoon or evening, that you could not recapture that ecstasy. Or, with tourist-like determination to " do " thoroughly some foreign town in which you have found yourself, you may have gone early in the morning to a picture gallery, and been enthralled there by some picture, which, in the afternoon, when you came back to see it, somehow disappointed you, not seeming quite so wonderful. The fault, believe me, was not in the picture, but in yourself—in the self that the day had been busily blunting and marring. Art does not reveal her secrets unless you go to her as a child might go. And it is only in the morning that you are child-like. It is only then that your soul is fresh and free, worthy of the sacrament.

In the morning, then, in the quite early morning, the London theatres should be open, and in the evening never. Imagine a musical comedy on which the curtain rose at 9 A.M. ! How rightly we should be revolted by it, seeing it in its true colours, in all its grossness and inanity ! Or imagine what in these conditions would become of such plays as

Mr. Esmond and Captain Hood now confect for our maudlin pleasure! We should shift away all such trash very quickly, should we not? On the other hand, we should make a good deal of our masterpieces. We should cry out for more masterpieces, and our cry would be answered. In every theatre . . . Utopian, am I? In the morning the community is hard at work? Then let all the houses of business be closed in the morning and remain open in the evening. But we are still by way of being a business-like nation? And the morning, as I said, is the only proper time for business? Well, I admit that you have posed me. But an idea is not the less serious because it cannot be realised. A dream is not the less true for unfulfilment.

A CURSORY CONSPECTUS OF G. B. S.

November 2, 1901.

ASSUMING that Mr. Shaw will live to the age of ninety (and such is the world's delight in him that even then his death will seem premature), I find that he has already fulfilled one half of his life span. Yet is it only in the past seven years or so that he has gained his vogue. One would suppose that so distinct a creature, so sharply complete in himself, must have been from the outset famous. But the fact remains that every morning for some thirty-seven years Mr. Shaw woke up and found himself obscure. Though, of course, his friends and fellow-workers recognised in him a being apart, for the Anglo-Saxon race he did not exist. I have often wondered what was the reason: was it the world's usual obtuseness, or was it that Mr. Shaw was unusually late in development? I had no means of deciding. I did not possess any of Mr. Shaw's early work. Thus very welcome to me is the reprint of a novel * written by Mr. Shaw in the flush of youth. Of the novel itself Mr. Shaw him-

* "Cashel Byron's Profession." By Bernard Shaw. London: Grant Richards. 1901. 6*s*.

self evidently thinks no great shakes. For on this excursion he takes with him even more than his usual armful of light baggage—prefaces, notes, appendices, quotations; he has also a new portable dramatic version of his book. And, as he bustles along the platform with these spick-and-span impedimenta in his grasp, he seems hardly to care whether or not that battered old resuscitated trunk of his be thrown into the van. Yet for me that is the real object of interest. I rush to examine it, and tears of joy well up at the sight of "G. B. S." printed on it, as on the new hand-baggage, in letters of flame.

Yes! "Cashel Byron's Profession" is quite mature. Mr. Shaw is fully himself in it, and throughout it. It tallies with all his recent work. Such differences as may be found in it are differences of mere surface, due to the fashions of the decade in which it was written, not essential differences in the writer. Apart from them, it might be his latest book. It has all his well-known merits and faults, and who shall say whether his faults or his merits are the more delicious? His own quick strong brain is behind it all, darting through solid walls of popular fallacy to the truths that lie beyond them, and darting with the impetus of its own velocity far beyond those truths to ram itself against other walls of fallacy not less solid. All through the book we hear the loud, rhythmic machinery of this brain at work. The book vibrates to it as does a

steamer to the screw; and we, the passengers, rejoice in the sound of it, for we know that tremendous speed is being made. As a passage by steam is to a voyage by sail, so is Mr. Shaw's fiction to true fiction. A steamboat is nice because it takes us quickly to some destination; a sailing-yacht is nice in itself, nice for its own sake. Mr. Shaw's main wish is to take us somewhere. In other words, he wants to impress certain theories on us, to convert us to this or that view. The true creator wishes mainly to illude us with a sense of actual or imaginative reality. To achieve that aim, he must suppress himself and his theories: they kill illusion. He must accept life as it presents itself to his experience or imagination, not use his brain to twist it into the patterns of a purpose. Such self-sacrifice is beyond Mr. Shaw. He often says (and believes) that he is, despite his propagandism, a true delineator of life. But that is one of his delightful hallucinations, due to the fact that his sight for things as they are is weak in comparison with his insight into himself. In fact, Mr. Shaw is not a creator. He cannot see beyond his own nose. Even the fingers he outstretches from it to the world are (as I shall suggest) often invisible to him. Looking into his own heart, he sees clearly the world as it ought to be, and sees (as I have already suggested) further still. Of the world as it is he sees a clean-cut phantasmagoria, in which every phantom is his own unrecognised self. When he

describes what he has seen, himself is the one person illuded. Some novelists fail through being unable to throw themselves into the characters they have projected. They remain critically outside, instead of becoming the characters themselves. This is not the explanation of Mr. Shaw's failure. He does not stand outside his characters: a man cannot slip his own skin. Mr. Shaw fails because the characters are all himself, and all he can do is to differentiate them by "quick-changes." But these disguises he makes in a very perfunctory way—a few twists of diaphanous gauze, a new attitude, nothing more. Thus it is in "Cashel Byron," as in his plays. Take Cashel himself. Mr. Shaw means to present him as a very stupid young man with a genius for pugilism. But soon he turns out to be a very clever young man, with a genius for introspection and ratiocinatory exposition. These powers are not incompatible with a genius for prize-fighting. But quite incompatible with it are physical cowardice and lack of any sentiment for the art practised. Mr. Shaw makes Cashel a coward, and lets him abandon prize-fighting without a pang at the first opportunity, in order to prove his thesis that prize-fighting is a mere mechanical business in which neither sentiment nor courage is involved. As usual he goes further than the truth. It is untrue that prize-fighters are heroes and artists and nothing else, as the public regards them. But it is equally untrue that you can use your fists (gloved or

ungloved) without courage, or that any man with supreme natural ability can care nothing for the channel in which it exclusively runs. Thus Cashel does not credibly exist for us: he is the victim of a thesis. Besides, he is Mr. Shaw. So, of course, is Lydia, the heroine, the imperturbable, strong-minded, blue-stockinged heroine, who, like the rest of Mr. Shaw's heroines, has nothing to do but set every one right—a sinecure, so easily does she do it. The only characters that really illude us are the subordinate characters, of whom we see merely the surfaces and not the souls. Mr. Shaw has a keen eye for superficial idiosyncrasies, and such figures as Mellish and Mrs. Skene are as possible as they are delicious, though even they are always ready to dart out on us and ratiocinate in Mr. Shaw's manner.

After all, it is Mr. Shaw *qu'il nous faut.* My analogy of the steamship was misleading. Though Mr. Shaw's chief aim, indeed, is to proselytise, we enjoy his preaching for its own sake, without reference to conviction. We enjoy for its own sake the process by which he arrives at his conclusions. At least, we do so if we take him in the right way. We must not take him too seriously. An eminent scholar once said to me that what he disliked in Mr. Shaw was his lack of moral courage. I pricked up my ears, delighted: here was a new idea! Urged by me to explain himself, the eminent scholar said "Well, whenever he propounds a

serious thesis of his own, he does so in a jocular vein, not being sure that he is right, and knowing that if he is wrong he will have saved his face by laughing in his reader's "—or words to that effect. I was disappointed. My interlocutor had betrayed simply his incapacity to understand the rudiments of Shawism. The fact that he is a Scotchman, and that Mr. Shaw is an Irishman, ought to have forewarned me. To take Mr. Shaw thus seriously is as inept as to believe (and many folk do believe) that he is a single-minded buffoon. In him, as in so many Irishmen, seriousness and frivolity are inextricably woven in and out of each other. He is not a serious man trying to be frivolous. He is a serious man who cannot help being frivolous, and in him height of spirits is combined with depth of conviction more illustriously than in any of his compatriots. That is why he amuses me as does no one else. The merely "comic man" is as intolerable in literature as in social intercourse. Humour undiluted is the most depressing of all phenomena. Humour must have its background of seriousness. Without this contrast there comes none of that incongruity which is the mainspring of laughter. The more sombre the background the brightlier skips the jest. In most of the serious writers who are also humorous there is perfect secretion between the two faculties. Thus in Matthew Arnold's controversial writings the humorous passages are always distinct interludes or

"asides" consciously made, and distinct from the scheme of the essay. They are irresistible by reason of the preceding seriousness. But in Mr. Shaw the contrast is still sharper and more striking. For there the two moods are, as it were, arm in arm—inseparable comrades. Mr. Shaw cannot realise his own pertness, nor can he preserve his own gravity, for more than a few moments at a time. Even when he sets out to be funny for fun's sake, he must needs always pretend that there is a serious reason for the emprise; and he pretends so strenuously that he ends by convincing us almost as fully as he convinces himself. Thus the absurdity, whatever it be, comes off doubly well. Conversely, even when he is really engrossed in some process of serious argument, or moved to real eloquence by one of his social ideals, he emits involuntarily some wild jape which makes the whole thing ridiculous—as ridiculous to himself as to us; and straightway he proceeds to caricature his own thesis till everything is topsy-turvy; and we, rolling with laughter, look up and find him no longer on his head, but on his heels, talking away quite gravely; and this sets us off again. For, of course, when seriousness and frivolity thus co-exist inseparably in a man, the seriousness is nullified by the frivolity. The latter is fed by the former, but, graceless and vampire-like, kills it. As a teacher, as a propagandist, Mr. Shaw is no good at all, even in his own generation. But as a personality he is immortal.

BJÖRNSON AT THE ROYALTY THEATRE

November 16, 1901.

LATELY I wrote about commercial success and failure in the management of theatres. I took the Haymarket as the type of a successful theatre, and ascribed its triumph mainly to the fact that its present managers had an innate *flair* for what the public wanted, and had supplemented this *flair* with so much scientific study that they could gauge exactly the chances of any play sent to them. But, let me say, theirs is not the only way to prosperity though it is perhaps the only way to untold wealth. The Royalty Theatre, for example, has prospered in Mrs. Campbell's hands. It was, before she came to it, one of the "unlucky" theatres, whereas the Haymarket always had been "lucky;" and thus what Mrs. Campbell has in a small way achieved for it is commercially not less striking than what Messrs. Harrison and Maude have achieved in a large way for the Haymarket. Yet Mrs. Campbell makes no effort to give the public what it wants. Her policy is simply to give the public what she herself likes. As she has no passion for sentimental comedy, or melodrama, or farce, or musical comedy, a thoughtless person

might wonder how it is that such a policy has not spelt ruin. For most managers it undoubtedly would spell that so easily spelt word. For her it has spelt the more difficult word success, not so much because she is a great actress, but because the gods have endowed her with the added grace of a personality—magnetism, call it what you will—which the public is quite unable to resist.

Her latest offering is a series of matinées of "Beyond Human Power," an English version of a play in two acts by Björnson. It is a gift which none but she would have dared to offer, even in the afternoon, and which, if any one but she had offered it, would have been rejected with every expression of scorn and ribaldry. Last Saturday, however, I found the public respectfully entranced by it. The first act ended in a storm of applause. Simple Norwegians, of whom I saw several in the vestibule, were evidently elated by Björnson's triumph. "Skohl!" they murmured, gazing at the large photograph of the master which hung beneath a laurel-crown upon the wall. A fine head is Björnson's. A fine, square head, with an electric shock of hair upsprouting from it; and beneath it a pair of beetling brows and gleaming spectacles, and a stubborn, invincible nose, and a mouth ground between the millstones of upper lip and nether chin. The face of a tremendously dynamic and forthright person, strenuously imposing himself on the enfeebled nations of the South, and wringing

from them the homage he knows to be his due. And yet, impressive though the photograph was, or rather because it was so awfully impressive, I could not help smiling. For I knew well how ill this brawny Viking would have fared here, had not that frail-looking Southern lady, with the dreaming eyes, stood sponsor for him—had she not bent down and lifted him in her arms, affectionately, and carried him, and cooed over him.

If these words should meet the eye of any simple Norwegians, they must not suppose me to be sneering at Björnson's play. I sneer rather at the conventionality of people who cannot appreciate for its intrinsic goodness a play which does not conform with the current fashions of dramatic art in their own country. In the second act, as I shall suggest, Björnson defies not only our own current and negligible conventions in dramatic art, but also those eternal, universal conventions which inhere in the art—conventions which every dramatist should respect. And the result of this violence is that most of the second act seems to me (and must seem to any other impartial creature) hopelessly undramatic, dull and trivial. But with this rather large reservation, "Beyond Human Power" seems to me a fine and inspiring work. The irony of its story (I need not warn you of the sense in which I use the word "irony") is quite magnificent. Pastor Adolf Sang is a buoyant saint, practising the precepts of Christianity according to their most

literal significance, a giant rejoicing in the strength of his faith and in the strength that his faith gives him. There is no danger he will not encounter, so sure is he of Divine protection. There is no miracle he cannot work among the peasants who are in his charge. Over their weak and simple natures his simple strength has such sway that he can cure them of all sicknesses. He is a prophet not without honour in his own country, but (here is the first irony) he is a prophet without honour in his own home. His wife has never believed in him as an agent of Heaven, and has always taken a rationalistic view of his miracles. His two children, now that they have grown up, are also unbelieving. There is this further irony, that the children, loving him devotedly, are yearning to take him at his own valuation, and failing signally to do so. His effect on his wife is a matter of still deeper irony: in the knowledge that he, through his literal Christianity, is ruining the worldly prospects of the children, and in the constant struggle between her love for him and her desire for their welfare, she has suffered such torments that her health has broken down utterly. She is partially paralysed. She cannot sleep. She is always in pain. The omnibeneficent Pastor has ruined the life that he loves best of all. His wife's is the one affliction he cannot cure. Even *his* self-confidence is undermined by this salient failure. But he shakes off doubt, determining to put forth a vast effort. And it is on the success or

failure of this vast effort that the interest of the play is centred. Pastor Sang goes away to pray in his church. Presently, a bell is heard tolling. It is the signal that his prayer has begun. His wife falls into a quiet sleep. Scarcely have the children realised this wonder when they hear an ominous crash in the distance. They start up, knowing it to be a landslip from the mountains, knowing that nothing can save the church where their father is praying. Nearer and nearer comes the noise of crashing and crumbling. It passes, subsides, and through the silence comes the steady sound of the bell, tolling still . . . That is the end of the first act, and if you, reader, do not think it a finely dramatic end, then my writing must be lamentably inferior to Mrs. Campbell's stage-managing. Let us skip now to the end of the second act. In the room outside that in which the sick woman is still sleeping sits a company of Pastors. Pastor Sang is still in his church, praying. Will his prayer be granted ? Will the woman rise from her bed and come among them before the sun sets ? The light of the setting sun reddens the cross above the door, and a strange silence falls on the room. The door slowly opens, and through it, slowly and vaguely, with extended arms, comes the arisen woman. The peasants troop in, singing a hymn of praise. The Pastors join in the hymn, gazing awestruck at the miracle. And, at last, he who has wrought the miracle rushes in and clasps his wife in his arms.

In his arms she dies. "Oh", he gasps, "this—this is not what I meant." He has killed his wife by a miracle, and by that same token his own faith. This is not what he meant. The final irony of his fate is accomplished. He dies.

My suggestion that we should skip thus to the end was made in order that I might not spoil the description of what is fine in the play by describing with it what is ineffably tedious. Those Pastors! six or seven of them, every one of them with his own view as to how modern faith-healing ought to be regarded by the Norwegian Church. What they say is in itself, doubtless, quite sensible and interesting. But they have no business to say it in this play. It has no possible bearing on this play. The dramatic point is whether a particular miracle will or will not be accomplished. What is the attitude of Norwegian clergymen towards miracles in general is a question quite beside the point. If the opinions of these clergymen were likely to affect in any way the life of Pastor Sang, they might be dramatically excusable. But such is not the case. The clergymen are strangers from a distance, here by chance, and going away directly; and their discussion is purely academic. Dramatically they are quite impertinent, and in a work of art whatever is not pertinent is bad. Even in Norway, where, possibly, "Faith-healing and the Church" is a topic of acute controversy, these clergymen must have been a sorry dead-weight. That in England the audience

did not throw things at them is a great tribute to the goodness of the play as a whole—or, at least, to the glamorous power exercised by Mrs. Campbell, even when she is not visible on the stage.

If difficulty be the measure of achievement, Mrs. Campbell has never done anything so good as her impersonation of the bed-ridden woman. No problem in histrionics could be harder than this: how to hold the attention of an audience, throughout a long act, without raising your voice or moving your body. Glamour, how great soever, will not alone enable a mime to solve this problem. Mrs. Campbell solved it, somehow, through the working-out of certain abstruse equations in facial expression and vocal inflection. She wrought the triumph of technical skill over difficulties. Mr. Titheradge was duly spiritual as the faith-healer. But I do not think his personality is well suited to the part. He has too intellectual an air. It is the strength, and the weakness, of such a man as Pastor Sang that he cannot think, that he can only feel. Mr. Titheradge seemed obviously capable of both functions, and so failed to satisfy me. Mr. Du Maurier, as the Pastor's son, had the kind of part in which a self-conscious young Englishman would be bound to feel that he was making a fool of himself. Youth and self-consciousness go hand in hand, and to feel that one is making a fool of oneself is a sure means of doing so actually. But Mr. Du Maurier did nothing of the kind. Advancing years have made an artist of him.

"A MOST HARD-WORKING PROFESSION"

November 30, 1901.

THE eminent lawyer so amusingly drawn in Mr. Reginald Turner's novel, "Cynthia's Damages," describes his histrionic client as "a young lady who, by indomitable courage and application, has become a leading light in a most hard-working profession." This notion of stage life is not confined to lawyers. There is a quite general impression that to be a mime is to follow a frightfully arduous calling. As most mimes (say nine in ten of them) are almost always out of work, this impression seems to be rather false. Setting aside the submerged nine-tenths, let me inquire whether the buoyant tenth leads quite so laborious a life as we suppose.

Let me take, first of all, a cursory glance at other professions. I see the "man of business" leaving his home after an early breakfast and returning to it only for a late dinner. Half of one of the intervening hours he devotes to his lunch. Throughout the rest he is at work in his office. I see the civil servant at his desk from ten or eleven A.M. till five or six P.M. (Against his brief interval for lunch

must usually be set a whole evening devoted to literary work.) I see the clergyman going his perpetual round between Matins and Evensong. All day long I hear the naval officer shouting his orders from the quarter-deck, in the intervals of "cramming" for some imminent examination, and the barrister pleading for clients whose affairs he has mastered through prodigal expenditure of midnight-oil. The doctor's bell may be set clanging at any hour of the night, and out of bed must the doctor stumble forth into the night, to pit his skill against Death's. Never, while light lasts in the heavens, will the jealous painter spare one moment from his canvas. From the sculptor's hand the chisel drops not till . . . But enough of my cursory glance. I need not labour my point that most professions are worked at from morning to night without much cessation. In point of hard work, how do they compare with the peculiar profession of acting? The average play lasts from eight to eleven. A mime who appears both in the first and in the last act must reach the theatre at (say) half-past seven, in order to change his clothes and paint his face. Having removed the paint and resumed mufti, he leaves the theatre at (say) half-past eleven. Suppose that the distance between his home and the theatre is a distance of half an hour. We then credit him with a working-day of four hours. Suppose that there is a matinée both on Wednesday and on Saturday. We then credit

him with working for eight hours on two days in the week. But really we are too generous. The two hours spent by him in going backwards and forwards come rather under the head of healthy exercise than of actual labour. And in the three hours of the play's duration he is not working all the time. Deducting time for entr'actes, we find that a play lasts rather less than two and a half hours. We assume, too, that an actor who is not playing "lead" is not actually on the stage for more than half an hour altogether. During the greater part of the performance he is lounging at the "wings," or in the green-room, or in his dressing-room. So that the averagely successful mime is not actually practising his art for more than four hours in the course of the week. "But," you interject, "how about 'study'? And rehearsals?" True, I had forgotten them. But there is not nearly so much of them as there used to be. One must allow for the long-run system. In the old stock-companies there were, perhaps, daily rehearsals. But in the modern touring-company, which sets out on a wide nomady with but one play to bless itself with, there is after the outset no rehearsing at all. And I suppose that the London theatres have between them a yearly average of four productions apiece. Assuming that the average play is rehearsed for three weeks, and the average length of every rehearsal is three hours, we find that the averagely successful mime puts in

yearly some two hundred and sixteen hours of preliminary work. But we bring it down with a rush from that not very stupendous total, when we remember that only during one small part of every rehearsal is he himself rehearsing. Say that he himself is on the stage for three-quarters of an hour. That leaves fifty-four hours as his yearly average. I do not (judging by results) imagine that to actual "study" he devotes much more time than is required for learning his words by heart. Let us suppose, charitably, that he *thinks about* a new part for two hours altogether. That brings up his yearly average for extra work to sixty-two hours. I have not the patience to work out from my previous calculations his yearly average of hours of actual work before the public, and to collate this total (plus sixty-two) with the yearly average of hours spent in work by the doctors, sailors, lawyers, financiers, painters and other unfortunates. But I have said enough, surely, to gladden the hearts and stiffen the backs of all those stage-struck girls and stage-struck boys who are being checked in their aspirations by their parents' solemn warning that the stage means very hard work.

Let me carry encouragement a step further for them. In considering the exigency of any profession, one must take account not merely of the number of hours that must be devoted to work in the course of the year, but also of the degree of vital

energy—force of body, force of intellect, force of emotion—which in every hour it absorbs from you. Now, to be a great actor, you must have these three forces in a high degree. Unless you are physically strong you cannot get through the performance of such a part as Hamlet, for example, without showing obvious signs of fatigue. You cannot, moreover, give a worthy rendering of that part unless you have brought to bear on it a large brain and a large heart. But to give a worthy rendering of the average part is not so difficult an affair. To walk and talk for half an hour in the course of the evening makes no great strain on your physique, even though you have to walk gracefully and to talk in a loud tone. Moreover, the amount of brain-power you require for "studying" the average creation of the average dramatist is—well, not above the average. Nor is the emotional power that you require for "feeling" nightly all that is in it. However, doubtless, the aspirants whom I am addressing do not wish to be average mimes, and feel that they are cut out for great things. Even so, they need not fear that their art will "take it out of" them, to any alarming extent. In acting a great part they will have to spend a good deal of physical force. But their intellectual force will be spent merely beforehand: once their conception of a part's meaning is clear, their minds may be set at rest. They will not have to elucidate the part every evening. Nor will they even have to "feel" it after (say) fifty consecutive

evenings. Even if they then be still able to feel it (which is doubtful), they need not bother to do so. They will be able to produce on the audience, without any trouble, exactly the same effect as they produced at first through throwing their whole souls into every line. Their facial expression, their vocal inflections, their gestures—all these will come of their own accord, through force of habit. The long-run system is often deplored on the ground that the mimes "walk through" their parts. This is not quite just. Really, it is very seldom, even after two hundred nights, that one sees a mime acting with less evident strenuousness than at the beginning of the run. Nevertheless, any one who knows anything about the inner side of histrionics knows that this strenuousness, however convincing, may be but an illusion, that the mime may be merely producing his or her effects automatically. A curious instance of this detachment in mimes after a long run was given me, some years ago, by a candid actress. She was playing the principal part in a play which had had a very long run. Her part was that of a Russian countess, and her great scene came in the third act, when she determined to take poison. Sitting down at a table, she wrote a letter to her lover, speaking it aloud, sentence by sentence, according to the time-honoured convention, while her quill scoured the paper. "Ere you read these words, Ivan, I shall be far away, tasting a tranquillity which, since you came into my life, has been

denied me. You have wronged me foully, Ivan, and broken my heart. But now, in the shadow of death, I forgive you—forgive you for the sake of those few brief days of rapture when I knew myself loved by you. Already the shadow of Death is" &c., &c. It was a longish letter, and I quote from memory, but that was the effect of it. And the effect of it on the audience was very poignant. The sobs of the Countess, her chokings, the real tears that fell from her eyes, all had their counterparts in the audience. And yet it is a fact that, on most nights after the first flush of the play's run, Mrs. —— was taking the opportunity of writing some little note which she had forgotten to write before coming down to the theatre. "Dear Mr. ——. If you have nothing better to do, won't you come and dine with us quite quietly on Sunday? It seems such an age since I saw you. And I want to tell you all about" &c., &c., or "Mrs. —— is much surprised that Madame Chose has not sent the dress which she promised faithfully would arrive last night. Unless it is delivered before noon to-morrow" &c., &c.

How arose the general notion that mimes are a hard-worked race? The true answer to this question is, I think, suggested in "Cynthia's Damages." Commenting on the eminent lawyer's description of Miss Walpole, Mr. Turner says "it was always remarkable how hard-working all the actresses for whom he appeared seemed to be."

AROUND THEATRES

The British public holds a brief for all actors and actresses. The fascination of their atmosphere has conquered the public. And, ever moral, the public is determined to convince itself that it has been won not by fascination but by moral worth.

SOLILOQUIES IN DRAMA

December 7, 1901.

TALKING to oneself has this obvious advantage over any other form of oratory or gossip: one is assured of a sympathetic audience. But it has also this peculiar drawback: it is supposed to be one of the early symptoms of insanity. Wrongly so, perhaps. A mad-doctor might rule the habit out of his diagnosis. Nevertheless, the popular belief is firmly rooted. And it is for fear of this belief, doubtless, that we talk to ourselves, even as we dress our hair with straws, so rarely. It may be said that we never do address ourselves at any length except in the delirium of a fever. In moments of ordinary excitement, of course, we utter to the wind some sort of appropriate ejaculation. Delight wrings from us a cry of "Hurrah!" or "Thank Heaven!" even though there be none by to echo us. Similarly, in any disgust we emit one of those sounds whose rather poor equivalents in print are "Ugh" and "Faugh" "D——n" and "Tut". Much further than this we do not go. "Why, what an ass am I!" cries Hamlet in one of his soliloquies. Omitting the first word, and transposing the last two, the ordinary modern man does

often soliloquise to that extent. But he could no more soliloquise to Hamlet's extent than he could speak in decasyllabics. Nor is there any reason to suppose that that class of the community with which, contemptuous of his own fluency, Hamlet compared himself, is or ever was more prone to soliloquise than any other. In the matter of soliloquies we cannot accept Hamlet as an unbiassed authority. We merely find in him the possible origin of the belief that talking to oneself is a bad sign.

Now, the aim of modern dramatists is to come as near as possible to reality—to present life without accepting any convention which is not a convention necessary to theatric art. The classic instance of an unnecessary convention is the " happy ending ; " of a necessary convention, the three-sided rooms inhabited by the dramatis personæ. Then there are other conventions, whose necessity or negligibility is not quite so clear. For instance, the preservation of the two unities, time and space, does undoubtedly increase verisimilitude. It has often been argued that a dramatist ought to handle only such themes as can be handled without breaking those unities. But the effect of that argument were such a restriction for drama as none but the most hardened academic mind would welcome. The best rule for the dramatist is to defer to time and space until they become insufferable tyrants, when he may kick them out remorselessly. Another convention round which doubts have raged is the

convention of the soliloquy. This is, of course, opposite in kind to the time-and-space convention, for that it is a convention not of restriction but of license. In real life, as I have demonstrated, people don't soliloquise. "Therefore," said Ibsen, "my puppets shan't soliloquise." After a decent interval, when Ibsen's general ideal of realism had forced itself into the European mind, our own dramatists began to echo this particular determination. Mr. Jones, Mr. Pinero and others, not to be outdone, brought their fists down on their writing-tables, firmly exclaiming "*Our* puppets shan't soliloquise." For some years now their puppets haven't soliloquised. Insomuch that whenever we have heard the puppets of less accomplished playwrights unbosoming themselves to the audience, we (none loudlier than I) have protested against the miserable, outmoded, illusion-destroying little trick. Ten or fifteen years ago that trick would have passed without rebuke. We regarded the soliloquy as not less essential to drama than the three-walled room. So we accepted it calmly, without hurt to illusion. But now, persuaded that it is unnecessary, and that it can always be avoided by due technical skill, we are disilluded and enraged by it. Not, of course, in poetic drama. For there the aim is to show us not life as it is, but life through certain conventions of formal beauty. Such additional conventions as the soliloquy make there no difference to us. No one who had not a train to catch

would prefer "Hamlet" without the soliloquies of the Prince of Denmark. Mr Stephen Phillips, then, and all those others who tend the faint flame of poetic drama, may skip this article with light heels: the embargo on soliloquies does not affect *them*. It does, however, very really affect the prose-dramatist. It makes his task considerably harder. And it does much to ward away from dramaturgy those literary persons who might do much to improve our drama. Let not these persons skip this article. I hope to throw into it some rays of hope for them.

Though in real life we do not talk to ourselves, we do think to ourselves, and many of these thoughts we could not or would not divulge to any other creature, however dear a friend he might be. Perhaps these incommunicable thoughts are the most important we ever have—the thoughts which, if they were divulged, would best elucidate our characters and our actions. To elucidate the characters and actions of his puppets is the novelist's first duty. His best means of doing this is to throw himself into the brains of those puppets and admit us through the breach. This, in fact, is what he is always doing. "The door closed, and John Smith was left alone. At first his mind was a mere tumult of doubts. 'Why,' he wondered bitterly, 'had . . . Of course, it must be that she . . . Yet no, surely, it was he himself who had always . . .' He was filled with self-loathing. He looked into

the depths of his soul, fascinated by what he found there. He realised now for the first time that the motive of all that he had done throughout his life had been . . . A torrent of indignation at the world—the world that had made him what . . . A strange calm fell on him. 'After all,' he thought . . . Yet again there rose up and confronted him . . . And then a strange idea crept, like a thief, into his mind. . . . 'No, no, anything but that' . . . 'Yet' . . . His mind was made up. He looked at the clock. He had been communing with himself all through the night. Already there came a faint sound of twittering from the garden . . . " We all know the kind of thing. And a very necessary kind of thing it is. What would the serious novelist be without it? Something very like the modern dramatist. For the modern dramatist there are many occasions when it is essential that the audience be admitted into a puppet's brain. But he himself cannot, like the novelist, come forward, bow, and admit them. Of course, it might be argued that such occasions are to be avoided—that the inner workings of the mind are not *du théâtre*. But no one were quite such a fool as to use that argument. What then is the novelist to do? Even the most accomplished mime cannot be trusted to convey in dumb-show to even the most intelligent audience a really complicated train of thought. Soliloquies, I admit, are to be avoided, if avoided they can be, as being an un-

realistic convention. Is there any other way-out? What is the ordinary modern way-out? It is our old friend the Confidant. True, our old friend comes before us elaborately disguised. He is not the simpleton we knew of yore—the gaping simpleton with no excuse for his presence except his pricked-up ears. He is now endowed with a *locus standi* in the form of a character and a real connexion with the plot. But, for all that, the Confidant he remains. I do not like him. I do not like him, because to him are so often confided things which in real life would be confided to no one. The confiding of such things to him is an offence against fundamental reality, whereas the confiding of them through soliloquy to the audience is but an offence against reality of surface. It should be easier, in such cases, to accept soliloquy as a conventional substitute for silent thought than to accept confidence as an actual substitute. In such cases, then, our best dramatists are on a false tack in using the Confidant. Perhaps they are now too hardened in their method to use the soliloquy. But let the soliloquy be used without qualms by the trembling neophyte—without qualms, and with the happy knowledge that it is technically much easier to use than the Confidant. They need not fear that I shall blame them. Like other critics, I have in my day sweepingly condemned the soliloquy. But I had no right to do so, and I apologise. I shall not do so again.

Only (the trembling neophytes must not wholly cease to tremble), I shall persist in condemnation of soliloquies that do not seem to me inevitable. Soliloquies must be used for no other purpose than to let the audience into secrets which a puppet would not as a human being, even if he could, reveal to any one else, and which the dramatist cannot reveal except through that puppet's lips. Soliloquies must not be used as a convenient way of letting the audience know (for example) how many minutes it takes some puppet to walk from his house to the railway station, or whom he met at dinner on the preceding night, or how old he is. Such things as these must, of course, be overheard by us in his conversation with another puppet. In 1901 it is hardly necessary to warn the neophytes against that crude form of soliloquy, the "aside", which consists of a few words spoken by a puppet in the presence of others to keep the audience mindful of something already explained to them. In the palmy 'sixties it was all very well for the villain to look over the heroine's shoulder and shout "I do but dissemble." For the audience was composed of simple folk whose minds, untrained by any Board School, were mostly incapable of grasping clearly any fact or of retaining it for more than a minute. Also, the average actor of that period, untrained by any psychologic drama, probably knew no way of expressing deceit except a contraction of the brow and a side-long smile at the

audience. Nowadays, a dramatist must not proceed on the assumption that his mimes will be mere vocal dolts or that his audiences will be incapable of taking a single point that is not hammered into them. Neither of his mimes nor of his audience must he, however, expect too much. He must strike the mean. As to where exactly that mean is to be struck, he must use his own discretion.

"THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST"

January 18, 1902.

Of a play representing actual life there can be, I think, no test more severe than its revival after seven or eight years of abeyance. For that period is enough to make it untrue to the surface of the present, yet not enough to enable us to unswitch it from the present. How seldom is the test passed! There is a better chance, naturally, for plays that weave life into fantastic forms; but even for them not a very good chance; for the fashion in fantasy itself changes. Fashions form a cycle, and we, steadily moving in that cycle, are farther from whatever fashion we have just passed than from any other. The things which once pleased our grandfathers are tolerable in comparison with the things which once pleased us. If in the lumber of the latter we find something that still pleases us, pleases us as much as ever it did, then, surely, we may preen ourselves on the possession of a classic, and congratulate posterity. Last week, at the St. James', was revived "The Importance of Being Earnest," after an abeyance of exactly seven years —those seven years which, according to scientists,

change every molecule in the human body, leaving nothing of what was there before. And yet to me the play came out fresh and exquisite as ever, and over the whole house almost every line was sending ripples of laughter—cumulative ripples that became waves, and receded only for fear of drowning the next line. In kind the play always was unlike any other, and in its kind it still seems perfect. I do not wonder that now the critics boldly call it a classic, and predict immortality. And (timorous though I am apt to be in prophecy) I join gladly in their chorus.

A classic must be guarded jealously. Nothing should be added to, or detracted from, a classic. In the revival at the St. James', I noted several faults of textual omission. When Lady Bracknell is told by Mr. Worthing that he was originally found in a hand-bag in the cloak-room of Victoria Station, she echoes "The cloak-room at Victoria Station?" "Yes," he replies; "the Brighton Line." "The line is immaterial," she rejoins; "Mr. Worthing, I confess I am somewhat bewildered," &c. &c. Now, in the present revival "the line is immaterial" is omitted. Perhaps Mr. Alexander regarded it as an immaterial line. So it is, as far as the plot is concerned. But it is not the less deliciously funny. To skip it is inexcusable. Again, Mr. Wilde was a master in selection of words, and his words must not be amended. "Cecily," says Miss Prism, "you will read your Political Economy in my absence. The

chapter on the Fall of the Rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational." For "sensational" Miss Laverton substitutes "exciting"—a very poor substitute for that mot juste. Thus may the edge of magnificent absurdity be blunted. In the last act, again, Miss Laverton killed a vital point by inaccuracy. In the whole play there is no more delicious speech than Miss Prism's rhapsody over the restored hand-bag. This is a speech quintessential of the whole play's spirit. "It seems to be mine," says Miss Prism calmly. "Yes here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days. There is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage—an incident that occurred at Leamington. And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant moment I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years." The overturning of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days! Miss Laverton omitted "and happier". What a point to miss! Moreover, she gabbled the whole speech, paying no heed to those well-balanced cadences whose dignity contributes so much to the fun—without whose dignity, indeed, the fun evaporates. In such a play as this good acting is peculiarly important. It is, also, peculiarly difficult to obtain. The play is unique in kind, and thus most of the

mimes, having trained themselves for ordinary purposes, are bewildered in approaching it.

Before we try to define how it should be acted, let us try to define its character. In scheme, of course, it is a hackneyed farce—the story of a young man coming up to London "on the spree," and of another young man going down conversely to the country, and of the complications that ensue. In treatment, also, it is farcical, in so far as some of the fun depends on absurd "situations," "stage-business," and so forth. Thus one might assume that the best way to act it would be to rattle through it. That were a gross error. For, despite the scheme of the play, the fun depends mainly on what the characters say, rather than on what they do. They speak a kind of beautiful nonsense—the language of high comedy, twisted into fantasy. Throughout the dialogue is the horse-play of a distinguished intellect and a distinguished imagination—a horse-play among words and ideas, conducted with poetic dignity. What differentiates this farce from any other, and makes it funnier than any other, is the humorous contrast between its style and matter. To preserve its style fully, the dialogue must be spoken with grave unction. The sound and the sense of the words must be taken seriously, treated beautifully. If mimes rattle through the play and anyhow, they manage to obscure much of its style, and much, therefore, of its fun. They lower it towards the plane of ordinary

farce. This was what the mimes at the St. James' were doing on the first night. The play triumphed not by their help but in their despite. I must except Miss Lilian Braithwaite, who acted in precisely the right key of grace and dignity. She alone, in seeming to take her part quite seriously, showed that she had realised the full extent of its fun. Miss Margaret Halstan acted prettily, but in the direction of burlesque. By displaying a sense of humour she betrayed its limitations. Mr. Lyall Swete played the part of Doctor Chasuble as though it were a minutely realistic character study of a typical country clergyman. Instead of taking the part seriously for what it is, he tried to make it a serious part. He slurred over all the majestic utterances of the Canon, as though he feared that if he spoke them with proper unction he would be accused of forgetting that he was no longer in the Benson Company. I sighed for Mr. Henry Kemble, who "created" the part. I sighed, also, for the late Miss Rose Leclerq, who "created" the part of Lady Bracknell. Miss M. Talbot plays it in the conventional stage-dowager fashion. Miss Leclerq but no! I will not sink without a struggle into that period when a man begins to bore young people by raving to them about the mimes whom they never saw. Both Mr. George Alexander and Mr. Graham Browne rattled through their parts. Even in the second act, when not only the situation, but also the necessity for letting the audience realise the

situation, demands that John Worthing should make the slowest of entries, Mr. Alexander came bustling on at break-neck speed. I wish he would reconsider his theory of the play, call some rehearsals, and have his curtain rung up not at 8.45 but at 8.15. He may argue that this would not be worth his while, as "Paolo and Francesca" is to be produced so soon. I hope he is not going to have "Paolo and Francesca" rattled through. The effect on it would be quite as bad as on "The Importance of Being Earnest"—though not, I assure him, worse.

MR. SHAW'S TRAGEDY

February 1, 1902.

THE promptest notice of "Mrs. Warren's Profession" would have been too late to guide any one as to whether he should or should not go to see the play. And the belatedness of my notice matters the less because the play, though performed only twice, lives lustily in book-form, and will assuredly live so for many years. Not that it seems to me "a masterpiece—yes! with all reservations, a masterpiece," as Mr. Archer hastily acclaimed it. Indeed, having seen it acted, I am confirmed in my heresy that it is, as a work of art, a failure. But the failure of such a man as "G. B. S." is of more value than a score of ordinary men's neat and cheap successes, even as the "failure" of a Brummell is worthier than a score of made-up bows in the gleaming window of the hosier. "Mrs. Warren" is a powerful and stimulating, even an ennobling, piece of work—a great failure, if you like, but also a failure with elements of greatness in it. It is decried as unpleasant by those who cannot bear to be told publicly about things which in private they can discuss, and even tolerate, without a qualm. Such people are the majority. For me, I confess, a play with an unpleasant subject, written sincerely

and fearlessly by a man who has a keenly active brain and a keenly active interest in the life around him, is much less unpleasant than that milk-and-water romance (brewed of skimmed milk and stale water) which is the fare commonly provided for me in the theatre. It seems to me not only less unpleasant, but also less unwholesome. I am thankful for it.

Gratitude, however, does not benumb my other faculties. With all due deference to Mr. Archer, "Not a masterpiece, no! with all reservations, not a masterpiece" is my cry. The play is in Mr. Shaw's earlier manner—his 'prentice manner. It was written in the period when he had not yet found the proper form for expressing himself in drama. He has found that form now. He has come through experiment to the loose form of "Cæsar and Cleopatra," of "The Devil's Disciple"—that large and variegated form wherein there is elbow-room for all his irresponsible complexities. In "Mrs. Warren" he was still making tentative steps along the strait and narrow way of Ibsen. To exhaust a theme in four single acts requires tremendous artistic concentration. When the acts are split up loosely in scenes the author may divagate with impunity. But in four single acts there is no room for anything that is not strictly to the point. Any irrelevancy offends us. And irrelevancy is of the essence of Mr. Shaw's genius. Try as he would, in admiration of his master, he could not keep him-

self relevant to Mrs. Warren. We find him bobbing up at intervals throughout the play, and then bobbing down again, quickly, ashamed of himself. In the loose form which he has now found for himself he can bob up as often as he likes, and always we are overjoyed to see him. But in the old constricted form we frown at him. We frown not merely at the waste of time, but also as at a breach of good taste. Mr. Shaw is a comedic person, Mrs. Warren a tragic. The Restoration is over, and no dramatist could treat her from any but a tragic standpoint. It is from this standpoint, of course, that Mr. Shaw has treated her. And thus we are jarred by the involuntary intrusions of Mr. Shaw's self. They give a painful effect of levity, though we know well that nothing can be further from levity than the spirit in which Mr. Shaw regards his theme. Theme, spirit: that brings us to the root of the matter. The main secret of the play's failure is that we have a comedian trying to be tragic. To create a tragedy, you must have a sense of that pity and terror which——"Agreed," Mr. Shaw will interrupt "and I have nothing if not that sense. If you don't find it in this play of mine, you must be blind." "Agreed," I rejoin. But I proceed to suggest that a man may be more than a comedian in himself, yet fail to be tragic in dramaturgy, and that Mr. Shaw does not feel the pity and terror of life in the way that a tragic dramatist must feel it. His sense of it is a sincere and fine

one. But it is the satirist's sense. He is sorry for things as they are, and afraid of things as they are, and angry that they are not otherwise, and laudably anxious to reform them. His is a fine civic ardour, which I should be the last to disparage. But it does not constitute him a tragic dramatist. The tragic dramatist must feel pity and terror in a certain specific way. It is through the hearts of men and women that he must feel them. He must be able to see into their hearts, and show us what he has seen there. He must be able to create human beings. Comedy's main appeal is to the head, tragedy's to the heart. We can be intellectually interested in figures that do not illude us as real, but we cannot feel for such figures. Thus in comedy a subjectively created figure will do well enough, but in tragedy it is useless. Mr. Shaw cannot create a figure objectively, and thus he cannot communicate to us through drama a tragic emotion. Tragedy, of course, can appeal not only to the heart, but also, incidentally, to the head. From the intellectual point of view, "Mrs. Warren" is, as I have said, a most stimulating affair. We admire the writer's grip of his subject. We cordially agree with his views. We praise the trenchancy of his expression. A remarkable little pamphlet! We really must have it bound! . . . With a start, we realise that this is not a pamphlet whose leaves we are turning, but a play which is being acted. . . . Our mistake was rather a stupid one. For if this

play had been a pamphlet, it would have been appealing to our hearts and our heads simultaneously. The fact that it appealed (despite its theme) only to our heads ought to have reminded us that it was an ill-created tragedy. So tragic a theme could not otherwise have failed to touch us.

In order to rouse public opinion against those economic conditions by which a Mrs. Warren is produced, Mr. Shaw, as dramatist, could not have chosen a better means than that of juxtaposing Mrs. Warren with a grown-up daughter who is ignorant of her mother's history and occupation. There you have the makings of a fine tragic conflict. Only it is necessary that the daughter should be of flesh and blood. And there you are bumped up against one of the limitations in Mr. Shaw's genius. Doubtless, Mr. Shaw will say that Vivie is of authentic flesh and blood. I am ready to believe that there may be, here and there, a well-brought-up girl who would behave as (admirably, if Mr. Shaw likes) Vivie behaves. Only, such girls are very rare, very abnormal ; and, in any case, Mr. Shaw has not succeeded in making this one seem like anything but a figment created by him to show how, in his opinion, a girl in such circumstances ought to behave. But even if he had made her real, that would not be enough. The tragic dramatist must not only be able to make a character real : he must also be able to select the kind of character that is right for his purpose. In "Mrs. Warren,"

obviously, the character of the daughter ought to be normal. Were she a normal girl, the situation would stir us to pity and awe. As she is but an unsympathetic figment dangled before our eyes, we are merely interested. The whole play becomes a mere academic debate. Mr. Shaw has called attention to certain things, and has moved a resolution, and we have all voted for the resolution, and there is an end of the matter. Perhaps I go too far. The moving of a resolution does give a kind of artistic finish to a debate. But there is no kind of art in the conclusion of Mr. Shaw's play. We leave Vivie Warren precisely the same as we found her. She has passed through her ordeal without turning a hair. At any rate, any hair that may have turned has been pressed back severely into its place. The girl is not at all to be pitied, and since we cannot pity her, we lose all the emotion that the play might have given us. As an acute critic, Mr. Shaw must have known that it was essential to his play that Vivie should be made human. The fact that he did not make her so proves that he could not. The fact that he could not puts him out of court as a tragic dramatist. As an acute critic, he has realised this third fact, and is acting accordingly —doing the kind of work that he ought to do, in the way in which only he can do it. I felicitate him. I felicitate everybody.

A TRAGIC COMEDIAN

February 22, 1902.

THE monotony of the outcry for a National Theatre is broken, now and again, by an outcry for a National School of Acting. I think that such a School would be a rather cumbrous and expensive means of teaching our mimes those little technical tricks which they contrive to master for themselves at cost of a brief experience. It would not, of course, be a means of creating great mimes, or even good mimes. It would not evoke genius or talent where genius or talent was not. Let the outcriers for it remember (and such of them as happen to be playgoers cannot fail to remember) that we have in England a quite sufficient number of mimes who "know their business." In London, in the suburbs, in the provinces, you do not often see any obvious amateur on the professional stage. When you do see one, you may be quite sure that there is some definitely financial or romantic reason for the engagement, and that the management could have found, at a moment's notice, a score of efficiently professional substitutes—a score of mimes who could have walked and talked without suggesting to us what must have been the port and elocution of Charles I. half an hour after his head was cut off.

Without any School, the supply of mimes who "know their business" is already far in excess of the demand for them. Nor would a School do anything to save us from the obtrusion of an amateur here and there. If, on the other hand, any of our outcriers harbour the delusion that a School would inculcate something more than technical tricks, let them reflect that we have already more than a sufficient number of decent actors to go round. We very seldom see a play that is not really beneath notice, but we constantly see in one play two or three quite admirable actors. It is not so much actors as dramatists that we lack. Had we merely a greater number of good actors, we should have merely an even greater amount of talent being thrown away on unworthy materials. I admit that we have very few good actresses. I do not profess to explain the rarity. Acting is supposed to be the only art (except singing) in which women may excel equally with men. But the fact remains that in this country, and in this age, the superiority of the male to the female sex is almost as obvious in the art of acting as it is in the other, more directly creative, arts. However, there remains this fact, also: that the small number of good actresses at our disposal is quite large enough to cope with the worthy chances given by our dramatists. Thus, even if a School could drill histrionic talent into girls, it were not the less a superfluous institution. A School that could drill dramaturgic talent into

boys—that is what we need now. If cry out we must, let it be rather for an impossibility that we need than for one that we don't.

Of the good actors whose gifts, spent unworthily, are always shaming us for our lack of playwrights, perhaps the sharpest and strongest example is to be found in that irresistible creature, Mr. James Welch. That example is being adduced for us nightly at Terry's Theatre, in a farce called "The New Clown." The second act contains a scene which seems to have been written in order that the full force of the example be driven home into our hearts. Mr. Welch plays the part of a weak aristocrat who, through farcical complications, wishes to become a clown in a circus. The ring-master tells him the kind of thing which the public will expect of him: he must grin, and jump, and crow, and be frequently knocked down. The novice demurs. "Isn't it all rather mediæval?" he pleads. "Couldn't I introduce a few subtle effects of my own, such as——" "Certainly not," roars the ring-master. "What the public likes is to see a man being knocked down. And that's what you've got to give it." Throughout this scene, there was in Mr. Welch's acting a note of tragedy deeper than was needed for art's sake. There was a vibrating note which must have been sounded from the depths of his own private soul. Was not the scene a precise epitome of Mr. Welch's career on the stage? Is it not always his inexorable fate to

grin, and jump, and crow, and be monotonously buffeted? And, to him, being what he is, must not this seem a cruelly, stupidly unjust fate? Year in year out, we see him in a sequence of inane farces, with never a chance of doing real justice to his qualities. It is true that he has established himself the prince of knock-about artists—of being-knocked-about artists, at any rate. The public loves him devotedly, and is well content that he should continue to be what he is till crack of doom. But for us others, who revere an artist when we see him, and who hold that no true artist should be a being-knocked-about artist, Mr. Welch's career is a matter of irritation and distress hardly less poignant than it must be to Mr. Welch himself. The more lurid glimpses we catch of what he might do, the more are we distressed by what he actually is doing. In his every impersonation Mr. Welch gives us more or less frequent glimpses. We can always descry in him a true comedian, and occasionally a master of pathos. His strongest point, perhaps, is pathos. In "The New Clown," the other night, there was one moment at which, if I had been an irresponsible playgoer, not a critic on the look-out for points, the tears would have come into my eyes. The would-be clown, ordered by the ring-master to give a taste of his quality, has retired to the side of the tent, taken the tips of his coat-tails between finger and thumb of either hand, bounded into the air, uttering a hideous yell, and waddled to the

ring-master's side. He has looked up eagerly into the ring-master's face, but has seen there no shadow of a smile. Abashed, he repeats his performance, this time for the benefit of the "strong man" of the show. He peers up into the averted face of the giant, who is staring blankly into distance. The giant slowly turns his head, and the would-be clown, thinking that he is going to meet a glance of approval, catches up his coat-tails again, and begins to smile. The coat-tails are dropped, the smile flickers away, under the scorn of the giant's gaze. . . . The episode lasts but a moment, with no word spoken. It is but the momentary twitch of Mr. Welch's eyelids, lips and fingers. And whatever passes thus in a moment, inarticulately, cannot be well described through the medium of writing. You must take it on trust that what I have tried to describe is a very rare and exquisite moment—one of those moments when the genius of an actor is revealed. Nor is comedic pathos the only kind of pathos in which Mr. Welch excels. If ever I heard the note of tragic pathos struck, I heard it struck authentically by Mr. Welch in "Macaire," in the lament of the little scoundrel over the dead body of the great scoundrel, his master. In the cry "I didn't blab on you, Macaire!" Mr. Welch had that in his voice and face which could have been heard in the voice, seen in the face, of none but a born tragedian. Strange, that into one small body should

have been packed thus together the souls of a comedian and a tragedian!

It is this very smallness of body which has prevented Mr. Welch from using in "high" classical tragedy the power which he undoubtedly has for it. That he would be a spiritually magnificent Othello I have no doubt at all. But even if, following a famous tradition, he blacked himself all over, he could not make a hit in the part. The process of his make-up would not have occupied sufficient time. Yet, though he is debarred by Nature from impersonating the normal heroes of tragedy, there is no reason why his tragic power should be revealed to us only in accidental glimpses—no reason, except the lamentable sterility of our modern dramatists. Who will write the tragi-comedy in which Mr. Welch will be able to use the full measure of his endowment? Generally, I disapprove the system of writing plays "round" this or that mime. But Mr. Welch is one of those exceptional beings in whose favour a critic willingly waives a principle. He is a tragic comedian, of the highest grade, measuring in height fewer inches than I should care to count. It were quite possible to create a play in which his tiny stature would be consistent with his towering talents. It would not, of course, be so easy as it is to write a play with a view to nothing but his tiny stature. But whoever did it would earn all my gratitude, and all the gratitude of every discerning playgoer.

MR. CRAIG'S EXPERIMENT

April 5, 1902.

In October, 1899, we went to war with the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. That war is still going on. In March, 1902, at the Great Queen Street Theatre, there was a production of a little opera and a masque, remarkable for that in it Mr. Gordon Craig had made, for our wonder and delight, certain strange and lovely experiments in the management and decoration of the stage. That production is not still going on. No such time-limit was set to it, originally, as was set to the war. It was to go on as long as the public would encourage it. Yet it did not outlast one week. Well! Though the direct concern of my life is with art, not with politics, my sense of proportion enables me to see that the brevity of Mr. Craig's campaign is a less serious matter than the length of Lord Kitchener's. I admit that I have collated a small matter with a great. Yet do I make no apology for the collation. For I take it that both matters spring from the same cause, and illustrate the same peculiarity in the nation.

It is often said and believed that the English are a political people, the French an artistic people—that the average Englishman has a flair for politics,

the average Frenchman for art. This idea is quite false. It is based on faulty observation, and on a radical blunder in psychology. The average Englishman is no more political than he is artistic. The average Frenchman is no less political than he is artistic. A feeling for art and a feeling for politics have the same roots. Both feelings come from a temperament which can be quickened in its owner by things abstract from his own person, his own private and immediate circumstances—a temperament which can imagine and generalise. You cannot have either feeling without the other. Having either, you must have the other. The temperament of the average Englishman is not imaginative. His interests are all narrow, domestic, personal. What lies beyond his own hearth has no meaning for him. He knows his own hob, fender, and fire-irons, and loves them with a surpassing love; but of all that is in him of love and knowledge these articles have a strict monopoly. This stolid apathy was a very good thing for the commonweal so long as England produced great statesmen. A great statesman, having at his back a solid mass of compatriots too inert to question his policy, or to do aught but what he bids it do, can work wonders for his country. But when the stock of greatness fails! When there is but a crew of little-minded and frivolous and improvident politicians! Then the commonweal requires a strong, energetic force of public opinion, to keep these politicians up

to the mark and out of mischief. Making a virtue of apathy, we pride ourselves on the calmness displayed by the nation during this long-drawn war. "What," we cry unctuously, "would have happened in France?" There would soon have been frettings, fumings, upheavals. Yes, but by those very eruptions might have been thrown up a wonder-working statesman. By them, at any rate, the small men in public life would have had their heads knocked together, and would have been forced to take things seriously—to stop the war altogether or to strain every nerve towards its quick conclusion in victory. The average Englishman, however, is well content to let things be. He sits in smugly rapt contemplation of his hob, fender, and fire-irons. He is a triumph of domesticity. And the same temperament in him which lets the Government do as little as it likes for as long as it likes has prevented Mr. Gordon Craig from displaying his achievements for more than a week at the Great Queen Street Theatre. And, as these achievements were so fresh and fascinating that I should have liked to see them many times, I take leave to deplore the effect of the national temperament on art as well as on politics.

Had Mr. Craig offered to Paris what he kept for London, he would have been the maker of a venture generally discussed and admired. But who in London wants "to tell or to hear some new thing" in any art? Twice a year the public will

leave its hob, fender, and fire-irons, to visit Burlington House. It will go to Her Majesty's or elsewhere, now and then, to sit under Shakespeare, and Dickens descends often from its book-shelf. If a modern dramatist be substituted for Shakespeare, that author must be conventional or be mistrusted. So must another novelist than Dickens. Artistic curiosity is a gift confined to a tiny and embarrassed number of the dwellers in London. Go to any little picture-gallery where some new kind of work is being exhibited, or to any theatre lent for the production of a play written by an unknown or foreign dramatist, and you will find always the same little public—the same wan and dishevelled men and women. Which sex preponderates in this little public it would be impossible to determine, for each looks so very like the other. But one thing is certain: always there are the same men and the same women. Occasionally you see among them some being from the outer world; but that is a rare and startling sight. The artistic public in London is a hole-and-corner public, an *eccentric* public, quite distinct from the rest of creation, and numbering not more than 200—perhaps 250—members. Perhaps, then, 250 people patronised Mr. Craig's experiment. Any one else must have strayed into the theatre by chance and been horribly bored. Commercially, the experiment was doomed from the first. Needless to say, that, with a few exceptions, the critics, not having seen anything like it, decried

it as absurd. And yet it was a very serious and delightful experiment, for which Mr. Craig deserves many thanks and puffs.

Even if I knew anything about music, I should not be so rash as to trespass on J. F. R.'s * ground. But I know nothing about music. I know not at all whether Mr. Craig's mode of production was appropriate or inappropriate to the spirit of Handel's "Acis and Galatea" and Purcell's "Masque of Love." All I know is that the production was in itself delicious, and that Mr. Craig's spirit and method would be invaluable in the mounting of certain kinds of plays. It would not be suitable to such plays as "Pilkerton's Peerage." But for plays of fantasy or of mystery it would work wonders. I hope Mr. Craig will be called in, somewhere, and soon, to devise and superintend the production of a children's pantomime or of a Maeterlinck play. How enchantingly pretty the one, and how hauntingly mystical the other would grow under his hands! I am sorry that my fatal habit of generalisation has left me no space in which to describe and analyse Mr. Craig's ideas of background and costume, "lighting" and "grouping"—the simplicity of that pale, one-coloured background, rising sheer beyond our range of vision, uninterrupted by "flies" or ceiling; the fluttering grace of those many-ribanded costumes, so simple, yet so various

* J. F. Runciman, musical critic of "The Saturday Review."

—every one of them a true invention; the cunning distribution and commingling of the figures and colours; the cunning adjustment of shadows over light, making of Polyphemus in "Acis and Galatea" a real giant—the one and only real and impressive giant ever seen on any stage, or ever likely to be seen till Mr. Craig is given the chance of giving us another. This cowled and terrible giant singing in his huge arbour, and those white-frocked children dancing beneath a flight of pink and white air-balls, and those solemn and slow-moving harlequins, with surcoats of dark gauze over their gay lozenges, setting the huge candles in the candelabra of the Prison of Love—they and the rest are ineffaceable pictures in my memory. Mr. Craig must give us many more such pretty pictures.

THE ADVANTAGE OF WRITING PLAYS

April 12, 1902.

AMONG the many curious phenomena which differentiate this era from past eras, and (dare one hope ?) from future eras, are those innumerable little penny magazines, published under the auspices of this or that prosperous news-company, for the tickling of a certain taste in fiction. "Girls' Chat," "Sunny Hours," "Rosy Thoughts," and the rest ! The news-companies batten on them, the bookstalls groan under them. Examine them, and you will find not much to choose between them. All of them consist mainly of serial and short stories, anonymously written, and interspersed with smudgy little process blocks. The illustrations do not vary : always we see the same young hero in flannels, with the same creases down his trousers, the same elderly clergyman with fleecy white hair, the same girl directing a punt or dreaming under the leafy porch of her father's (the clergyman's) house. And the stories themselves are not less invariable, are written always with the same lack of anything in the way of humour or imagination or observation, and with the same weak and clumsy pretence to prettiness of

sentiment. Who reads them ? Half-educated girls, presumably, read them. Who writes them ? From internal evidence it is obvious that they are written by half-educated girls. Lately, from a friend who is in a position to know, I learnt what is the scale of payment for these stories. Considering the enormous profits made out of them, this scale is appallingly low—a starvation wage, indeed. Yet it seems that many of the writers have no other means of subsistence. I conceived pity for these unfortunate, unknown writers, who are doing what is, after all, a form of skilled labour for so tiny a pittance, and with no prospect of fame or even credit. I wish to help them. I think I can help them, if they will listen to me. For sake of convenience, let me so far disregard their anonymity as to call them all, generically, Miss Evie Simpson.

Miss Evie Simpson, never having had public attention paid to her, is probably modest in right proportion to her lack of talent, and would recoil if I sprang my suggestion on her suddenly. She would think I was laughing at her, suggesting that she should do something quite beyond her powers. Therefore, let me preface my suggestion, and clear the ground for it, with a few remarks at large. Let Miss Simpson consider this general proposition. A and B are doing two different kinds of work. But the difference between these two kinds of work is superficial, not essential. Both kinds require the same qualities in the workers. Now if, by examina-

tion of A's little efforts, it could be proved that A, doing B's work, would produce something exactly like B's little efforts, and that he could not produce anything better than B's little efforts, what deduction would you draw? Miss Simpson is ready with her answer. Her deduction is that if, conversely, B did A's work he would be able to produce something not less good than A's little efforts. Quite right. Now, fiction and drama are two different kinds of work. But their differences are merely formal. Both of them depend on the same creative qualities—the power to observe and to imagine things, to project human or inhuman characters, to invent possible or impossible circumstances, and so on, and so on. Therefore, if the work of A, the dramatist, be such that we know that any stories he might write would have exactly the qualities so remarkable in the stories of B, and would have no other qualities beyond, then we may be quite sure that if B wrote plays they would be as good as A's. Now, we have already defined Miss Simpson as a writer of stories. Captain Basil Hood will allow us to define him as a writer of plays. But what sort of plays does he write? Some of his activity goes to the writing of libretti. But them we need not take into account. We need consider him merely as contriver of plays written in prose and in relation to modern life. Nor need we plod back through all his achievements in this kind. For "My Pretty Maid," which was produced last Saturday at

Terry's Theatre, is a perfect specimen. We find in it all the usual attributes of Captain Hood, with no additions or subtractions. What do we find in it? Not very much, certainly. There is a beauteous girl, whose father is a dear old schoolmaster. She loves, and is loved by, a "double-blue." Both the lovers are very poor—she because her father is much too "sympathetic" to make his business pay. There is an ugly usher, horrid and mean, who loves her, and can make or mar her father's school, and uses his power to win her hand. But there is a Lord. He is very rich, and is the friend of the "double-blue," whom he makes agent of his estate; and so all ends happily, not far from where it began. Reading my précis of the plot—and so little plot is there that I have hardly needed to compress anything—Miss Simpson will recognise a plot which she herself, in her time, has used again and again. If she will go and see the play, she will recognise also that the characters are exactly as she herself has always drawn them, or left them undrawn, and that the dialogue is instinct with just that mild futility which she, poor girl, knows to be the hall-mark of her own dialogue. What inference will she draw? This, of course: that if Captain Hood were with her on the staff of "Rosy Thoughts" his "copy" would be so exactly like hers that one or the other of them would have to go. And then, remembering that general law which she and I have just worked out together, her eyes will

open very wide, and, bewildered, she will hold her breath.

At first, she will shrink from the inevitable corollary. She will be miserably sure that there must be some flaw in our reasoning—"it is too good to be true." Nay, let her be re-assured. The formal difference between fiction and drama need not affright her. She, doubtless, has no formal talent for dramaturgy. She would not know how to knit together and how to unravel, how to prepare and how to progress, and to do all those other things which are the peculiar secrets of the craft. But does Captain Hood know? Not he. Or, if he does know, how blithely he ignores his knowledge! The second act of "My Pretty Maid" does not require the first; the third would get on quite well without the second. Such as it is, the play consists of two acts, which are called the third and fourth. And even in them how wonderfully little there is! And I defy you, Miss Simpson, to find in them anything that you could not have done yourself. Self-confidence is the one thing you need. Cultivate that. And then, go in and win. For exactly that amount and quality of talent which have been winning you a handful of silver, you will receive a large cheque "on signing contract," another large cheque "on production," and yet another large cheque every Friday night of many ensuing weeks, to say nothing of other yet larger cheques for provincial, American, and Colonial

rights. Yes, there is a good time coming for you—coming not only for your exchequer, but also for your self-respect. O hitherto inglorious girl, your features shall be made familiar to us through all the illustrated weeklies, your name shall be written in scarlet—EVIE SIMPSON—along all the omnibuses, and to you, even as to the Captain, will a daily paper presently devote a whole column of its valuable space, wherein will be solemnly set forth your "methods of work." And the dramatic critics, sitting in judgment on the results, shall pronounce them "singularly dainty," "undeniably fresh," "eminently wholesome," and "altogether delightful." Have the literary critics ever turned to praise you? Never. So different are the standards which are applied to fiction and dramaturgy. If I myself, after the production of your first play, do not praise you, you need not be downcast. I am so foolish as to imagine that what is negligible in a newspaper is negligible also on the stage. I am so dense as to see no difference between the Miss Simpson that is and the Miss Simpson that shall be—between the Miss Simpson and the Captain Hood that are. But this very folly and denseness I have displayed to you, Miss Simpson, for your salvation. And, as a rich and popular dramatist, you will be able to laugh at me—me, splashed with mud by the wheels of your highly-swung barouche, or, at best, riding on an omnibus emblazoned with your name.

AN ACTRESS, AND A PLAY

May 24, 1902.

"SAPHO," at the Adelphi, is not a play to be admired very warmly by any one who knows Daudet's book, or by any one who does not. Quite evidently, Mr. Clyde Fitch's aim was not to do full justice to Daudet or to himself, but to give a set of glorious chances to Miss Olga Nethersole. And here the chances are, and here is Miss Nethersole, taking them. In part-payment of this debt to America, she has left there nearly all her mannerisms; and thus there is little of the old impediment to our admiration of her great qualities—her originality, her intelligence, her wonderful technique. "What an actress!" is our thought, from first to last, while she glides in and out of innumerable moods, and ranges all the emotions to which humanity is liable. From first to last, she has authoritative hold on our attention, and "brava!" is ever on our lips. On the first night (some time ago, now), the critics of the morning-papers were vexed that the curtain did not fall before midnight: how, they asked, were they to get their notices done before their papers went to press? But were not their notices already written out, verbatim, in their heads? Did they have to sit down and enubilate

from a general impression of rapture the reasons why they had been pleased? Surely they knew, at every single point in the performance, by what means pleasure was being produced in them. Their pleasure was in the conscious appreciation of those means. They were not surrendering themselves, humbly, to a dramatic illusion. They were taking note of a fine display of histrionic art, a demonstration impressive by reason of its exquisite lucidity. There was nothing to make their hearts beat, but there was a large consignment of furniture, delivered in an orderly and businesslike way, for the cells of their brains.

There you have the limitation of Miss Nethersole as an actress. She never touches you through the character impersonated. It is of her art that you are always conscious. Why should this be? The reason is apparent: Miss Nethersole is always conscious of her own art. She stands aloof from her conception of a character, and calmly, though lavishly, supplies it with the resources of her art. According to Diderot, of course, this is the one and only right method. But the famous Paradox, though it is quite sound as an academic theory, flatly falls to the ground of experience. We learn by experience that, if a mime lose not himself or herself in his or her part, he or she leaves us inilluded. Now, the state of inillusion is all very well in the case of broad comedy. For, as Elia suggested, in such comedy illusion is not needed—

not, at least, to its full extent: there the mime may, and should, exercise a critical as well as a creative faculty. And thus we can account for the posthumous encouragement given to Diderot by M. Coquelin and other comedians who can compass none but the comedic method. Tragedy is quite another matter. In tragedy we must be illuded, touched, thrilled. And this effect can be wrought on us only by a mime whose whole heart and soul are fused indissolubly into the part assumed. Acting is a form of hypnotic suggestion. If a mime believe that he or she is what he (confound the English lack of a common personal pronoun in the singular!) or she is pretending to be, then are we, too, credulous. If there be pity and awe (see how I am trying to dodge that confounded lack!) in the mime's own bosom, then are we, too, sorry and afraid. At least, we are so if the mime's technique, consciously acquired and unconsciously used, be so good as to fit, and to express, exactly and inobtrusively, the mime's own emotions. Then it is for the critic to acclaim a truly great performance in tragedy. This pious office is not imposed on him, and never will be, by Miss Nethersole. But she does afford him the æsthetic pleasure of studying a technique which is, in itself—in its strength and suppleness and sureness—as perfect as a technique can be. And, if he do not recognise, and acclaim loudly, that perfection, he writes himself down a brute impervious to the art of acting.

I apologise to the Stage Society for being so belated in my tribute to its production of "The Lady from the Sea." My only excuse is that the production itself seemed to be belated. Try though I would to blink myself into a belief that my eyes were deceiving me, I had to acknowledge the gaunt solidity of the confronting fact that Ibsen was already old-fashioned. Try as I would to hear the play ringing true, my ears insisted that it was ringing, aye! pealing, false. "Byron is dead!"—can that message have fallen with a more awful suddenness on our grandfathers than "Ibsen is old-fashioned!" falls on us? The news from Missolonghi was at first discredited, and so, in a sense, was broken gently. Similarly, only those who attended the private production of "The Lady from the Sea" will read my news without a hopeful doubt. For us, who were on the spot, the best course is to dash away our tears, see if we can find out the cause of the tragedy, and draw some moral from it. As we listened to the play, was it the technique that seemed out of date? No, that seemed out of date only in the sense that Ibsen is still several years ahead of all his competitors. Was it . . . but there is no need for a process of elimination. It was Ellida, the Lady herself, who was the trouble, diffusing over the footlights the scent of things long kept in lavender. Ellida, as you may remember, is the usual Ibsenist heroine, propounder of the regular Ibsenist ideas. Ah!

those ideas, how quaint and tedious they have become! How often we seem to have heard them! How little we care to hear them again! That is the dangerous thing about new ideas: they are old so soon. They are delightfully exciting for a time. But presently one of two sad fates befalls them. Either we accept them, and they become truisms; or, as is the case with Ibsen's femininistic propaganda, we reject them, and they become irritating little old paradoxes, and woe betide the dramatis persona who mouths them for us. If this creature be an authentic human creature, behaving as such, then perhaps we are appeased. But—and here is another danger for the dramatist with ideas—the chances are that the creature has been built primarily as a mouth-piece. Our friend Ellida has been built that way, and so we think of her not as our friend at all, but as a very old acquaintance whom we are anxious to drop. A few years ago we should have been much impressed when she suddenly abandons her aspirations of her soul because her husband gives her leave to elope if she wishes to, or to do anything else that takes her fancy. But then Ibsen's insistence on the equal rights of the sexes—or rather, on the lesser rights of the male sex—was a new idea in drama. We should have overlooked the crude falseness of the psychology, in our excitement over the idea for whose illustration the character had been twisted. But when an idea is old and tattered it is no longer a garment in which

a lay-figure can compete with a thing of flesh and blood. Certainly, Ellida must be dropped. And Nora, and all those others? I suppose so. But Time is a cyclist. The things of the day before yesterday are nearer to us than the things of yesterday, and nearer still are the things of the day before the day before. Ellida and the rest, creatures of yesterday, will grow gradually younger, and will doubtless be much admired at the close of the century. Meanwhile, our discovery that they do belong to yesterday is a cruelly sharp reminder of our own advancing years.

HONOUR AMONG DRAMATIC CRITICS

June 7, 1902.

I HAVE been reading a pamphlet which evoked some fuss in the seventies. In contrast with its title, which sounds curiously modern, its contents are quite ghastly in their obsoleteness. Of the scores of persons satirised in it hardly one is alive now, hardly one has not been forgotten by us since his death. So fleet are the wings of Time that the names bestowed on the various butts of this elaborate pasquinade—names which at the time were flimsiest disguises—are now disguises penetrable only by strong erudition and ingenuity. To understand a tithe of the allusions, which at the time doubtless raised instant laughter throughout the town, we should need now an immense mass of notes composed by elderly and indefatigable commentators. Not in the comedies of Aristophanes himself do we find a denser plexus of petty points to be elucidated than in this pamphlet over which has passed only one quarter of a century. Ah ! let the enemies of the satirist, in every age, soften their hearts. Time wreaks on that poor gentleman so summary a vengeance. So soon do the bells of his cap jingle rustily against his skull.

AROUND THEATRES

In all this pamphlet nothing has seemed to me more quaintly remote than the section in which are scourged the critics of the contemporary drama. The scene is a tavern near Fleet Street, where various disreputable persons of both sexes foregather in a state of more or less inebriation. This, apparently, is the favourite haunt of the dramatic critics. What is thought of them there is suggested in the speech made by an actor for the instruction of the stranger who has just strayed in. The speech runs thus (but let me save space by writing the verses continuously): "Don't be hard on the critics, sir. Poor things! They've got their little weaknesses, no doubt. They 'cut up' hardly, foolishly they praise; they're apt to sit out first performances at the refreshment-bar or nearest 'pub,' where they'll ask 'How's it going?' and record a triumph or failure from the answers. . . . They've all three acts somewhere about them, acts that must be played, acts that must find a manager, a stage, a company. What would you have them do? Why damn the wittols who won't hear of it, and puff the houses where they have a chance." How infinite a gulf yawns between now and then! Of course, one narrows it with a margin for satirical exaggeration. The dramatic critics were never, doubtless, even in the seventies, quite so desperate a gang as is here depicted for us. There are some white sheep in every fold. Nevertheless, if you consult any trustworthy cockney who is old enough

to have been behind the scenes of that period, he will give you an account tallying roughly with the account given in this satire. Also, if you consult the average provincial whose knowledge of things is based on vague hearsay, he or she will tell you that in London to-day the dramatic critics are beset with all kinds of temptations to dishonesty, and that they more often than not succumb. Thus does the secret truth of one generation become the common fallacy of the next. I am afraid it would be useless for me to try to enlighten the provinces: they would construe my protest as merely an ebullition of *esprit de corps* and guilty conscience. But for my own pleasure, and for the pleasure of any one else who knows the true facts, it is worth while to inquire how and why it is that dramatic criticism has, in so short a time, undergone so great a change, becoming so very respectable indeed.

To a certain extent, an art is affected in its welfare by the quality of its critics. Good critics are good for it, bad critics are bad for it. But only an art that is by way of doing well can hope to have good critics. An art that is sunk in a slough of incompetency will cry in vain to good critics to rescue it. If it struggles out of the slough and begins to cleanse itself, then the good critics will draw near and show a friendly interest. Well! you must remember that in the seventies and early eighties English drama was almost wholly in the hands of miserable hacks whose highest accomplishment was

the making of adaptations from French plays. As an art, it did not exist: it was simply one of the less lucrative trades. Accordingly, the task of criticising it was tossed to the fools. In the newspaper offices any reporter was considered good enough to "do" a new play. The only doubt was whether he were not *too* good, whether he had not better be kept in on the chance of a fire or a murder or some other event of real import. But towards the close of the eighties a strange thing happened. English drama began to struggle in the slough. Crying aloud for help, it struggled, slowly and painfully, towards hard dry ground. It has now, for some time, been out of the slough. It has been making honourable efforts to purge itself of the mire that cakes it—efforts great enough to conciliate quite intelligent and artistic persons who would not, previously, have touched it with a barge-pole. At first there were but one or two of these tardy good Samaritans; but their number has multiplied apace. Now even the editors of the daily papers—some of them, at any rate—have so far moved with the times (and with the "Times") that they prefer to have their dramatic criticism done well. Like the editors of weekly papers, they seek a man of real ability, a man who can observe, and think, and feel, and perhaps write. But, of course, this kind of man is not going to devote himself wholly to dramatic criticism. He has other stakes in life or in art, and it would not pay him to withdraw them.

Thus, if one analysed a list of the intelligent dramatic critics (and this would be a fairly exhaustive list, since almost all the duffers have died out), one would find two civil servants, a barrister in good practice, two poets, an essayist, a political secretary, a caricaturist, the editor of a monthly review, several men whose main business is in reviewing books, and other men in various other callings. Indeed, I do not think there is one who is merely a dramatic critic. There are only two whom one would describe as being primarily dramatic critics. With these two exceptions, the men who write about plays regard the work as a mere parergon. They are in the theatre, but not of it. They treat it seriously enough, but it is for them only a small thing in their lives. Now, for the average dramatic critic of the seventies the theatre was by no means a small thing. For him it was the predominant factor in his life. A man of no account, with merely the knack of reeling out ungrammatical copy, he was delighted to find that the task of writing about the theatre gave him an actual importance in one sphere—the theatrical sphere. He found that mimes made up to him, and he blushingly cultivated the society of these the only people who did not ignore him. He found them willing even to pay him, in one way or another, for favours received—him who had never, in his most sanguine hour, dreamed of being able to confer the smallest favour on any human being. He found that he could

make money through plays which could never be acted, if he offered them to the right managers. The poor fellow's head was turned. And he became a scamp—he whom Nature had intended to be only a fool.

The modern dramatic critics are immune from moral danger because they have, as I said, greater interests outside the theatre than inside it. They do not cultivate the society of mimes and managers: their ways are far aloof. Of course they do, now and again, in the chances of social intercourse, meet mimes and managers. And, being human, they cannot but be affected in favour of persons who behave agreeably to them. But their heads are not turned, their integrity is not undermined, for they are already accustomed to being treated agreeably. They may alter the manner, but they do not alter the matter, of their future criticisms of a mime or manager whom they have met. They have too much respect for their work, and too much care for their reputations, to let themselves be really "got at" through sentiment. Of course, if one of them happens to write a play, and that play is accepted by a manager, he does feel unwilling to attack other plays produced by that manager. But then, if his play is a success, he instantly retires from dramatic criticism and devotes himself to dramaturgy. If his play is a failure, his aforesaid self-respect and caution save him from doing wrong. He is so afraid of being deceived by his gratitude.

and of being thought venal, that he errs invariably on the side of harshness whenever he criticises his champion's other productions. . . . But all this is well known in London. I find myself, after all, addressing the provinces. They mayn't believe me, but I do assure them that we dramatic critics are, like the Metropolitan Police Force, a very fine body of men.

"LA VEINE"

July 19, 1902.

Luck—a hateful thing, is it not? As moralists, you hate it. As rationalists, you hate it. However deplorable your own conduct, you wish, as you watch the struggle of life, bad people to go under, and good people to come up smiling to the top. Yet are you often forced to own that the old comparison between the unrighteous and the green bay tree still holds good. And alas! not only the clever unrighteous, but also the stupid unrighteous, often flourisheth before your eyes. "Why," you ask, "has So-and-So got on so well? He is not brilliant. In fact, his brain is rather below the average. Yet . . . ." Your rational sense insisting on some sort of explanation of So-and-So's success, you murmur something about "force of character." But, as often as not, So-and-So happens to have a receding chin and a wandering eye. You find yourselves brought up—bump!—against the dead wall of Luck. M. Maeterlinck has lately scaled this wall, and peered over it, and assured you, for your comfort, that there is something on the other side of it—something really rational. A lucky man, according to M. Maeterlinck,

is one who, in a previous incarnation, was a sage. In him, hidden deep down in his soul, the old wisdom and foresight linger unsuspected, prompting him to do or not to do this thing or that; and he, unconsciously, obeys these promptings, and so, mysteriously, prospers. This is a pretty explanation, and one is eager to accept it. I fancy that M. Capus, however, would laugh it to scorn. It is quite impossible that Julien Bréard, the hero of "La Veine," was ever a sage, even in the remotest incarnation, so grossly sensual and earthy a creature is he now. And yet, through no quality except luck, he rises triumphantly from point to point, and is still rising when the final curtain hides him from us. M. Capus evidently regards the incidence of Luck as a pure fluke. "Je crois," says Bréard (and the speech is one of those in which the author, rather than the character, seems to be speaking), "je crois que tout homme pas trop sot, pas trop timide, a dans la vie son heure de veine, un moment où les autres hommes semblent travailler pour lui, où les fruits viennent se mettre à portée de sa main . . . Cette heure-là, c'est triste à dire, mais ce n'est ni le travail, ni le courage, ni la patience qui nous la donne. Elle sonne à une horloge qu'on ne voit pas, et tant qu'elle n'a pas sonné pour nous, nous avons beau déployer tous les talents et toutes les vertus, il n'y a rien à faire, nous sommes des fétus de paille." There you have the whole philosophy of the play. "Comme c'est faux, ce que

vous dites là, et surtout décourageant ! " cries the woman to whom Bréard has expounded it. Nevertheless, it turns out to be not at all false in Bréard's case. The hour of luck strikes presently for him, and he, though he is weak and lazy and of no more than average intelligence, becomes a rich and famous man, apparently self-made, with a brilliant future in the Chamber of Deputies. Naturally, this demonstration by M. Capus has made most of the dramatic critics very angry. Like Charlotte Lanier, they declare it to be false and discouraging. Discouraging it may be. But that it is not wholly false is testified for any one of us by a score of instances in life. It is, at any rate, much less false and frivolous than that notion which the average critic accepts so respectfully from the average dramatist—the notion of virtue triumphant in the end.

M. Capus has been chidden also for the low moral tone revealed by every character in his play. " They have," writes one shocked critic, " no more morals than have monkeys." Precisely. And that is the very reason why it is absurd for any one to be shocked. You are not shocked by the thought of what goes on in the branches of a primeval forest, for there, as you know, there is no consciousness of moral law. Monkeys are not wicked, because they are not consciously wicked. If we sent into their midst missionaries who could learn their language and teach them clearly the differences

(as determined by us) between right and wrong, and if, thereafter, the monkeys still persisted in their traditional license, we should have the right to regard them as wicked, and to be shocked by them. Turn, now, to the characters in this play. The first scene is the interior of a Parisian flower-shop. Three girls, wiring flowers, discuss the comparative advantages of being and not being "honnête." Two of them think that a girl who is so has the better chance of being happy and successful in the long run. A third inclines strongly to the opposite view. She does her duty in her present state of life, but her ideal is to be the mistress of a millionaire. Enter the "patronne" of the shop, an amiable, respectable, hard-working woman. The question is referred to her. She replies, "Si c'est un conseil que vous me demandez, je vous dirai de rester honnêtes le plus longtemps que vous pourrez; d'abord vous ne risquez rien. Mais le jour où le hasard vous fera rencontrer un homme qui vous aimera et que vous aimerez aussi, tâchez de ne plus le quitter" etc. etc. Later, enters a gentleman to buy a button-hole. A millionaire, he offers leisure and luxury to the girl who has been dreaming of him. When he has gone, the girl reports to the patronne the offer and its acceptance. "Vous ne me gardez rancune?" she asks. "Moi?" laughs the patronne. "Je te souhaite qu'une chose, c'est d'être parfaitement heureuse. Tu vas mener la vie que tu désirais. Tâche de ne pas

perdre la tête." Try not to lose your head: that is the one golden rule of sexual conduct known to the characters throughout the play. Conventional morality in sex is not flouted by them: it does not exist for them. They are, for the most part, honest, industrious, kindly, unselfish folk; but the notion of chastity or continence as a good thing, and of unchastity or incontinence as a bad thing, in itself, is a notion of which no glimmer is revealed to them. Consequently, they are blameless, one and all, for their wrong-doing. To be shocked by them argues a hopeless confusion of mind. Let our dramatic critics reserve their indignation for those other plays, in which the characters are self-conscious winkers and gigglers over their own misconduct, taking us into their confidence, and inviting us to wink and giggle with them. Such plays are not at all uncommon on our virtuous native stage, and no man need be ashamed of being shocked by them.

Perhaps the play's wholly non-moral atmosphere detracts somewhat from the value of it as a picture of life. In life such an atmosphere is found only in places where there is wealth and leisure. The characters in "La Veine" belong mostly to the poor and hard-working class. In France—as will be granted by any one whose knowledge of France is not based wholly on hearsay—this class is even more strongly under the influence of morality than

it is in England. And thus, M. Capus . . . But here have I been solemnly weighing the play as a philosophy of life, and as a representation of life, when all the while I ought to have been writing of it as what it so pre-eminently is : a little comedy shimmering all through with a humour that is not quite like any other. I shall return to it next week.

COMEDY IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH

July 26, 1902.

CERTAINLY, in my province, the prime event of this season has been the introduction of M. Capus. "La Veine," and now "Les Deux Écoles"—how fresh, tart, bubblesome a beverage, briskly refreshing our palates and dispelling the taste of so much foregoing stodge! Last week, foolishly, I did not just quaff "La Veine," but gravely sipped it, rolled it over my tongue, held it up to the light, discussing it as though it had been some full-bodied and blood-making wine that must have a full and solemn justice done to it. True, there was more body in "La Veine" than there is in a dozen of our usual headache-giving native comedies. Throughout it was a philosophic idea, cunningly treated, and a central figure who was a general type delineated with acutest fidelity; and all the other figures in it were credible human beings behaving in accord to their several natures. But, for all that, the play's point, its pre-eminent merit, was in the exquisite fun and lightness of its dialogue. In a criticism of "Les Deux Écoles" ponderousness were even more amiss. This play, even more than the other, depends for its triumph on its dialogue.

It is not, like the other, a philosophic comedy, but a philosophic farce. It is permeated by quite a good comedic idea; to wit, that a woman must choose between two kinds of husband—the solid, upright man who will be faithful to her, boring her all the while, and the high-spirited man against whose delightful presence must be set by her his frequent absence. But the idea is treated in the convention of farce. There is the young wife divorcing her light husband, and subsequently betrothed to "der solide mensch". (Why does this German phrase seem more expressive than "l'homme sérieux"? The type indicated is really quite as common in France as in Germany. The only difference is that, whereas in Germany it is extolled, in France it is laughed at.) And there is the husband lightly turning to a cocotte. And then there is a quadrille. The "solide mensch" wearies his betrothed, who forgives and remarries her divorced husband, while the cocotte is fascinated by the "solide mensch," and he in his turn is fascinated by her. The whole action of the play is wrought thus in a prescribed pattern. The characters are not left, as in "La Veine," to do what they like. Realistic enough on the surface, they are but conventional puppets, manipulated for no purpose but that of laughter. The play, in fact, is a farce. As such, rightly, it is performed by the company. One member of the cast is somewhat too farcically farcical. M. Guy, as Le Hautois, has not the right kind of solidity.

He does not preserve the proper surface of realism. A Sir Willoughby Patterne was evidently the intention of M. Capus; but M. Guy appears as a Chadband. No woman in the world could respect such a creature, could deem him not altogether ludicrous and impossible from the outset. And thus is queered the necessary balance between him and the divorced husband. Moreover the fun of his ultimate downfall thus loses all its edge. The part of Le Hautois is a good instance of the much-broken law that in farce the characters must not necessarily be made ridiculous by their interpreters. In farce, very often, the fun of a character is proportionate to the seriousness with which its interpreter takes it, or to the charm with which he invests it, or to . . . But again I wax ponderous—ponderous though M. Capus' dialogue is still ringing so lightly and brightly in my ears. How shall I describe to you that delicious sound? What is the peculiar quality of it? I might quote for you instances of M. Capus' wit, as when one of his characters remarks "La foule est aussi une solitude. Qui a dit cela?" and another replies "C'est un homme qui n'est jamais allé à un rendez-vous." Or I might quote for you instances of the humour—that soft, irresponsible humour, so much more Irish than French—pervading and illumining every scene in either play. But of what avail is it to snap-shot summer-lightning? The virtue of M. Capus' humour, as of all good dramatic humour, is

in its context. You cannot separate it, cut it out, transfer it. Besides, it is a humour made to be spoken, not written. A delicate Irish humour, expressed in the French language, spoken by French voices—that is the nearest expression I can find for the secret of the delight offered to us at the Garrick Theatre.

What a perennial delight there is in hearing the French language spoken! A year or two ago I evoked in these columns, unwittingly, a long and ardent discussion by saying that the French language seemed to me an unsatisfactory vehicle for the higher kinds of poetry, for that it was too clear, too neat, too keen—incapable of leaving anything to the imagination. And that opinion is still fixed in my insular mind. But, though I thus depreciate the French language in its appeal to the soul, I yield to none in my admiration of it as a supreme means to slighter ends. For languages, as for animals, there are, it seems to me, two sexes. There are masculine languages and feminine languages. Of those of which I can speak with any familiarity, ancient Greek is the only one that seems to me hermaphroditic, combining fully in itself masculine strength and feminine grace. Latin, of course, is wholly masculine; but French, its descendant, is wholly feminine. And, even as among human beings the great things are conceived always in the brains of men, and executed by men's hands, while many little things can be conceived

and executed incomparably better by women than by men, so are the feminine languages incomparably better adapted than the masculine to such lighter tasks as ordinary conversation, though they cannot compete with the masculine in those graver tasks, of which poetry is an example. In French how quickly, how neatly, how gracefully, you can say just what you want to say to your interlocutor! How blunt and heavy and ugly an old instrument, in comparison, English seems! And, since one of the aims of realistic modern comedy is to reproduce succinctly the language of ordinary life, it follows that the French comic dramatist starts thus far happily ahead of any English rival. His words are winged. They fly straight across the footlights of their own accord. They do not have to be packed up in bundles and hurled at us. They come flying to us of their own accord, swiftly, unerringly, ever so prettily. Certainly, were I a dramatist, I should never forgive Fate for not making me a Frenchman too. As a critic, whenever I see a French comedy, I am always glad that I am English, for that so I have a standard of comparison enabling me to realise and enjoy those blessings which the Frenchman (contemptuously ignorant of any language but his own) takes simply as a matter of course.

Nor is the language which is his medium the sole handicap for the English comic dramatist. The French dramatist is always likelier to be well interpreted by his mimes. In French acting we are

conscious always of something that is lacking even in the best of English acting. We may assure one another, patriotically, that if French mimes were acting English characters they would fare as ill as English mimes acting French characters, and that the sole difference is the difference of nationality. But we know, in our heart of hearts, that there is an intrinsic superiority in French acting, not to be explained away. The fact is, of course, that the French are a naturally expressive race. It is natural for them to express themselves through facial play and gesture, as mimes must, and through modulations of the voice. It is not natural for us to do so. And thus, whereas the English mime has to use art to cover up the fact that he is doing what Nature did not mean him to do, the French mime need use art merely to do as well as possible what Nature did intend him to do. This is a great saving of time. And, accordingly, the French mime is like to acquire a far greater proficiency than the English mime in the various tricks of his art. His personality may be no more—may be much less—impressive or amusing than the personality of this or that English rival; but he has the pull of superior art. To say that there are not bad French mimes were as absurd as to say that there are not good English ones. My contention is merely that the average French mimes are better than the average English, and that the best English are inferior to the best French. I should like to know

in what English theatre we could hope to see a comedy played so perfectly as "La Veine" and "Les Deux Écoles". And yet none of the performers is an imposing genius. Madame Granier lacks magnetism, and has no peculiar charm. Yet, so perfect is she in her art, that one would willingly give in exchange for her a round dozen of our leading-ladies, and would even throw in one or two of our actresses. M. Guitry, again, brings nothing save his art; yet the gift is ample. As for Madame Lavallière and M. Brasseur, each of those drolls is quite unlike any other creature in the world; and I feel that life in England without a stereoscopicinemetophonograph of them both will hardly be worth living.

A PRETTY PLAY SPOILT

September 20, 1902.

THE theme of "Quality Street" (produced last Wednesday at the Vaudeville Theatre) is that of "The Finding of Nancy." Mr. Barrie sets out to show us, as did Miss Syrett, the tragedy of a girl in whom joy of life is being sapped by years of drudgery—a girl growing old without benefit of girlhood. But nothing could be more different than the spirit in which the two authors have touched their theme. Here we have the essential difference between masculine and feminine. Miss Syrett it is who sounded the masculine note, Mr. Barrie now chiming in with the feminine. Miss Syrett went straight to the root of the matter, strong and unflinching. Mr. Barrie hovers around it, smiling and sobbing in a very pretty and becoming manner, and quite sure that we shall all liken him to an April day. Commercially, it is well for Mr. Barrie that he behaves thus, since the average playgoer loves this kind of behaviour as deeply as he is disturbed and annoyed by Miss Syrett's kind. Artistically, too, it is well for Mr. Barrie. Neither his humour nor his pathos blends well with any attempt to create seriously from the materials of

real life. In his descriptions of Thrums he was always delightful, for the very reason that his Scotch peasants were as remote from reality as are the Irish fairies of Mr. Yeats. They were just the creatures of his humour and pathos, to be irresponsibly enjoyed by us. But when Mr. Barrie begins, as he began in his book "Tommy and Grizel" and in his play "The Wedding Guest," to try to tackle seriously the serious real things around him, then his pathos runs to mawkishness, and his fun is apt to jar; then, moreover, his fundamental ignorance of any kind of life outside the local colour invented by him degenerates into something of a nuisance. So I am glad that of his latest theme he has made merely a little fairy story, with characters not pretending to be more than shadows cast by characters of Miss Jane Austen, and performing a shadow-dance of a strictly theatrical kind. Into such characters and incidents as we have here may be infused quite agreeably any amount of Mr. Barrie's famous mixture—I refer not to the most famous one of all, known to us through the advertisements of tobacconists, but to that tears-and-laughter mixture, which, I am glad to think, must have been found almost equally saleable. "Quality Street," in fact, is a thing done in Mr. Barrie's right manner. I cannot describe it better than by saying that it is "sweetly pretty." It is perhaps the sweetliest prettiest thing yet done by Mr. Barrie. And if it do not become in England

one of his most lucrative things, the fault will be not his, but rather the fault of its English interpreters.

Ironically enough, the play suffers in interpretation through the very fact which is its main motive : that women are ashamed of being no longer young or of not looking young. When first is shown to us the parlour in Quality Street, Miss Phœbe Throssell is twenty years old, Miss Susan thirty or so. Miss Phœbe is held to be marriageable, but Miss Susan is regarded as being far past the period of her attractions—a creature irremeably on the shelf. Yet I vow that Miss Marion Terry, as Miss Susan, might have passed, physically, for an ingénue. And in exactly similar case were three ladies who impersonated three spinsters coæval with Miss Susan. After the first act (according to the programme) nine years elapse. Not with so much as a wing of gossamer do they touch Miss Susan. The lady has not aged by one fraction of a second. Nor have her three coævals. Nor has her little sister. And yet, according to Mr. Barrie, the little sister is now a confirmed sufferer from headache and " tired eyes " and other grievous symptoms of eld, hastened by the drudgery of keeping a school. Insomuch that Valentine Brown, remembering her as she was, and now, after long years of absence, seeing her as she is, is stung to the quick by the horrid pathos of it all. So is the elder sister. So is every one—every one, I mean, who does not happen to be on the other

side of the footlights. To every one who does happen to be in that position, and who sees on the stage not a single female arrived at years of discretion, all this talk about the tragedy of growing old and forfeiting all that in life is lovely does not ring truly enough to draw the number of tears which intrinsically it deserves of us. Without the illusion of coming eld Mr. Barrie's play is pointless. I urge Mr. Barrie to go angrily down to the theatre and call a dress-rehearsal and insist on his rights. Of course, Miss Marion Terry and Miss Ellaline Terriss and the rest might argue that the notion of a woman being necessarily less attractive at the age of thirty than at the age of twenty was an absurd notion, refutable by thousands of cases to be found in real life. But let not Mr. Barrie be drawn into any consideration of modern actuality. He has a perfectly sound case to go on. It is true that in England, at this time, women remain young in aspect and in spirit for an unconscionably long time. But the fashion is quite recent. You need not go so far back as to the daguerreotypes in quest of a time when women put all grace or coquetry aside, resigning themselves to middle age, as soon as their thirtieth birthday was upon them. Even a lustre ago, the woman of thirty dressed and behaved like an old maid, even as the youngest married woman dressed and behaved like a matron. Even to-day you need go no further than Germany to find an exact parallel to that curious state of

things. The standards by which youth and age are judged (and, therefore, youth and age themselves) vary in various times and places. I suppose that the more artificial the society, and the more self-conscious its pursuit of life, the greater is the tendency to prolong that period of life which is regarded as most pleasant. In any case, the fact remains that in the early part of last century, which is the period of Mr. Barrie's play, women looked, and felt themselves to be, well-stricken in years at an age that seems to us vernal. And the wilful disregard of that fact by the ladies engaged at the Vaudeville is a fault crying for rectification. It is strange that even the best actresses are inclined to be women first and artists afterwards. And it is a pity that authors and stage-managers do not strive more manfully to reverse that order.

I wish it were half so easy to explain what good acting is as to explain what isn't good acting. Such is the disparity between the two tasks that one is always laying oneself open to the charge of ungraciousness. How much more pleasant it would be now to spend my time in praise of Miss Marion Terry, with ever so brief a disparagement of Miss Ellaline Terriss, than to spend it in the following manner! But what can I say of Miss Terry, except such words as "sensibility" and "grace" and "sincerity" and so forth? I might add how glad I was to see a woman really feeling the part she was

acting, really identifying herself with it (in spirit, though not in aspect). But how tame all that would be, how unilluminating! I might try to analyse Miss Terry's technique; but with what chance of success? Is not the whole virtue of technique to be invisible, to defy analysis? On the other hand, Miss Ellaline Terriss offers a handle for something better than vague platitude, by reason of the very fact that she does not even begin to act—not, at least, in any strict sense of the word. She walks and talks very prettily, and is very pretty altogether. But never for one moment does she forget herself, still less merge herself for us, in the part she is playing. And in "Quality Street," alas! she is playing a very important part—a part on which rests quite a half of the play's burden, a part requiring infinite skill. All she does with it, in the lighter scenes, is to coo and nestle appealingly towards the audience, as though she were speaking the tag of an old English comedy; whilst in the emotional scenes she is like nothing but a school-girl repeating a lesson at the top of her voice. The voice, I repeat, is very pretty, and—but no! why qualify? Miss Terriss, flushed by the applause of her uncritical audience, and by the pæans of critics who think it safer not to discriminate between chalk and cheese, can face with equanimity my little plain truth. Of Mr. Seymour Hicks, as Valentine Brown, all that can be said is that from the moment of his first entry into the Miss Throssells' parlour he

behaves only as though he were playing football; and all that can be hopefully suggested to him is that he might try, by degrees, to make it parlour-football. The rules of the latter game are, I believe, quite simple—simpler far, anyhow, than the rules of acting.

ILL-CHOSEN BACKGROUNDS AT DRURY LANE

October 4, 1902.

WHETHER Oxford have reason to curse the memory of Mr. Rhodes is a point which Time alone can settle. Whether those forthcoming bevies of young Colonials *sans peur et sans reproche*, and of similar young Americans, will be easily absorbed, with all their perfections on their heads, and adapted to their environment, or whether they will produce atmospheric disturbances, unsettling the traditions of a place whose whole charm and use is in the placid maintenance of its traditions—whether, in fact, the newcomers will or won't be a great nuisance, we cannot tell until we have seen something of them. Meanwhile, the Benign Mother has acquired a fame wider than ever came to her in the past. She has been enormously puffed by the popular press. Her history has been recounted in long special articles, and the eccentricities of her character have been touched off, not unkindly, in innumerable paragraphs. Her name has been bandied freely and knowingly among those classes which had hitherto regarded her merely as an annual excuse for a bet. And now comes for her the proud corollary of being introduced by Mr. Cecil Raleigh, with a flourish, into the latest melodrama at Drury Lane.

Her début, I regret to say, was not an unqualified success. She was there to display her well-known accomplishment of "whispering to us the last enchantments of the middle age"; and she did her best; but somehow the whispers did not get across the footlights. One sighed for the Lawn at Ascot, or for the Promenade of the Empire Theatre, or for the Central Lobby of the House of Commons —for any of those more lurid scenes which Mr. Raleigh had lavished on us in other years. Oxford in Oxfordshire is as irresistible a city as was ever built by Time; but by very reason of one of its own dearest charms Oxford is unable to quit herself creditably in Drury Lane. She is not hustling enough. Some grey walls and towers, some old men in long black gowns, some young men in short black gowns—these, with nothing more, (and what more is there?) do not compass much of an effect in the kind of melodrama which is made to be spectacular before all things. Mr. Raleigh felt this instinctively. So, to enliven the milieu, on he brought a circus procession, with Mrs. John Wood as Britannia, and other sops for the eager jaws of his patrons. And Oxford had to take a back seat.

Poor Oxford! Will she, I wonder, ever be made successfully the background for a play, or for a novel? It is curious that of all the stories devoted to a portrayal of Oxford "Verdant Green" is the only one in which Oxford's spirit has been caught.

And " Verdant Green " is avowedly farcical. What is it that prevents the serious novelist from catching the spirit of the place ? I suppose it is his fear of eliminating sex. Without sex, he is sure, there can be no human interest ; and so the mainspring of every Oxford story is the love of an undergraduate for Miss So-and-So ; and so every Oxford story falls right out of focus. It is true that since the Fellows have been permitted to marry, and to take unto themselves little red-brick villas in the environs, and since the foundation of Somerville and Lady Margaret's Hall, Oxford has in itself quite a large feminine element. But the spirit of the place, so far as the undergraduates are concerned, is still the ancient spirit of celibacy. Roughly, it is true that in a young girl the desire for erudition is never allied to physical comeliness, and that to be a Don's wife in the Parks is not a choice ever made by a woman who has the chance of any other kind of married life. But the spirit of celibacy among undergraduates is not explicable through these incidental rules. There are exceptions to these rules. Now and again feminine comeliness occurs in Oxford, and you will hear undergraduates professing admiration of it ; but only a very light, remote kind of admiration is theirs, by no means distracting them from the usual tenour of their life. Sport, athletics, books, and, above all, good-fellowship—these are the things that make up the lives of the undergraduates, these are their true interests. The

instinct of sex is dormant, and, even if it happen to be stirred in vacation, it quickly relapses in term. And thus, to any one who knows Oxford well, the kind of novel which has hitherto been written about Oxford rings persistently false. There is a great chance for the novelist who shall accept the limitations of Oxford as a milieu, and write sincerely in the plenty of room left to him. But though fiction is ripe for a treatment of these academic materials—friendship, intellectual development and so forth—the stage is not yet, never perhaps will be, ripe for them. Certainly, nothing could be more unripe for them than the stage of Drury Lane. And, since Oxford does not afford the kind of scenic excitement which Drury Lane demands, I think Mr. Raleigh should have shunned it altogether. True, having got the circus into it, he bundles us out of it, so far as South Africa, with all possible speed. Nor are we again reminded of its existence, except at one delicious moment when a Boer who has got through the British lines is saved from instant execution by the plea that he, having been educated at St. Simon's College, Oxford, has just remembered that it is Boat Race day and has slipped in to drink success to the crew with an English officer who had been his contemporary at the dear old place. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of Oxford, that damp and insidious atmosphere, seems to overhang the rest of the play, and South Africa seems positively relaxing.

I doubt whether South Africa could, in any case, have been exhilarating. Had Mr. Raleigh treated the war from a sternly patriotic point of view, showing the Boers to be cunning and cowardly savages, the audience would not, I think, have been roused to enthusiasm. Two years ago that kind of thing would have gone down very well; but now that the war is over, the shrill voice of Jingoism would, I fancy, somewhat jar the public's ear. The very fact that Mr. Raleigh, avowedly a man who tries to write exactly the kind of thing which the public wants, did not assume that shrill voice is proof presumptive of the change in the public's feeling. I welcome the change, and I am glad to think that the voice which Mr. Raleigh has assumed this year is a voice better attuned to the public's ear. But I protest that he goes rather too far in his dulcet chivalry. He hardly gives the English a look in: almost everything is sacrificed to a sympathetic statement of the Boer case, to an exposition of Boer simplicity and bravery; and in the whole play the one really well-drawn character, the one part of which an actor can make anything, is the part of an aged commandant. The British officers are so many insignificant nine-pins, dotted around, while the aged commandant, as large as life, stands firmly in the middle of the stage, in a blaze of lime-light, being most awfully pathetic, all the time. Mr. Raleigh might argue that at Drury Lane a golden mean turns to lead—that you

must run to one extreme or the other. Doubtless, that argument would be quite sound. But it would merely clinch my point, that Mr. Raleigh ought to have left South Africa severely alone. The war is now remote enough for the public not to hate the Boers. But it is not so remote that the public can regard the Boer cause as something infinitely finer and more sympathetic than its own. The sporting instinct to favour the weaker side cannot be expected of the stronger combatant until the combat has passed into remote history. And therefore, at present, South Africa can make no wide dramatic appeal. I offer to Mr. Raleigh, too late, another, a simpler, reason for leaving the war alone. We are all so heartily sick of the very mention of the war. It continued for a long time, and there was a horde of professional and amateur writers incessantly describing it for us; insomuch that now we sicken at the sight of such words as "kopjes" and "khaki," and sicken accordingly when we see kopjes and khaki on the stage.

Altogether, it seems to me that in the selection of backgrounds which will please the public—and that is the art (if Mr. Raleigh will excuse the word) of writing dramas for Drury Lane—Mr. Raleigh has not shown his usual tact. I have no doubt that the public will go in its myriads to Drury Lane. But it will go rather by force of annual habit than by force of desire to see what is to be seen there.

THE VALUE OF "SYMPATHY" IN DRAMA

October 25, 1902.

WHAT we call "sympathy" is essential to a tragic play. To a farce it is fatal. If a man pursued by the Furies evoke from us nothing but a sporting interest as to which will win the race, Melpomene will disown him. Conversely, if he, sitting down on a basket of eggs or collapsing through a cucumber frame, wring from our hearts the tribute of pity and awe, the Muse of Farce—'Arriet, or whatever her classic name may be—will none of him. There are not Furies in every tragic play, nor cucumber frames and baskets of eggs in every farce. The persons and properties may be precisely the same in a farce as in a tragedy. The two forms differ essentially not in their materials but in the emotions at which they aim. Equally promising material for either form is, for example, a man unhappily married to one woman and in love with another. It is quite easy to make us weep with him or laugh at him, to make him tragic or farcical, without making the slightest addition to or subtraction from his actual circumstances. All that the dramatist need do is to make him either a sympathetic or a ridiculous person.

Midway between the forms of farce and tragedy lies the form of comedy. And here there is no necessary inclusion or exclusion of sympathy. Comedy may make her appeal either to the emotional or to the intellectual side of us, she may make us either care what happens to her puppets or merely be interested in seeing what happens to them. Comedy, in fact, may have it both ways. But not, I gather, in England to-day. There seems to be a decree that to-day in England comedy shall be ever thumping the lachrymal chords in us : " hands off " is the shriek if she stretch a tentative finger towards our intellects. The dearth of intellectual comedy is, indeed, one of the most lamentable features of our stage. In France such comedy is not at all rare : there is a veritable school of it, flourishing blithely. Why this difference ? I suppose because we are such a solemn race, a race believing that laughter must necessarily be a frivolous function, quite incompatible with any working of the brain, and believing that the only good excuse for laughter is a plenteous admixture of those tears which we, being also a very sentimental race, have always on tap. And I hazard the further reason that we, being what we nationally are rather in virtue of stubborn strength of character than in virtue of brain-power, and having indeed remarkably little brain-power, but having a certain shrewdness of our own, are anxious to husband such brain-power as we have, jealously storing it for business-hours,

and sternly refusing to waste it over an art which, so far from putting anything into our pockets, takes something out of them. Yet another possible reason is to be found in the mimes themselves. The acceptance or refusal of plays at almost every theatre depends, directly or indirectly, on the will of some eminent mime. And almost always the dear desire of an eminent mime is to appear in a sympathetic part. A long part, a strong part, a part demanding keen intelligence, a part giving scope for display of technical skill—these, in their way, are all very well for him, but ever his loadstar is a sympathetic part. I believe this preference to be a thing of recent growth. In every age, of course, the mime has confused himself with the parts assumed by him, and has been confused so by the public. That is in the stupid nature of things. But in the old days, when the mime, outside the theatre, was regarded as an uninteresting outcast with no private life to speak of, it mattered little to him whether or not the public liked him personally. But now that he is as illustrious off as on the boards, it does matter to him very much indeed. Confronted with an unsympathetic part, he sees social ruin staring him in the face—sees his most important friends in the audience gazing with strange cold eyes at him, whispering to one another behind their programmes, determining to drop him. By a definitely antipathetic part he is not affrighted. Called on to forge and foreclose, to seduce and

murder, he struts bravely forth; for nobody would suspect him, the well-regulated, of doing in his off hours such far-fetched things. But it is not impossible that he might be suspected of not being a really nice man—not a really kind and generous and truthful and sweet-tempered paragon on his inner hearth. And so the untried young dramatist, even the acclaimed and mature dramatist, who submits to him a play without a part to make the hearts of the audience throb in sympathy with him, is sure of a very cold welcome. Of course, there are exceptions—eminent mimes in whom enthusiasm for their art outstrips self-respect. But the rule is as I have adumbrated. And doubtless it is one of the causes of the dearth deplored by me.

An audience's sympathy for one set of characters usually involves antipathy for another set of characters. And it is one of the tests of tact in a dramatist whether the sympathy and antipathy fall plump in the directions intended by him. Sometimes the audience shies from his lead, refuses to love his darlings or be appalled by his bogies; and the result is a disagreeable friction between its own instinct and its consciousness of what is expected of it. This is what happens at the Avenue Theatre while "Mrs. Willoughby's Kiss" is being enacted. Mr. Frank Stayton, the author, is said to be very young; and I have high hopes of his future, for his youth betrays itself not in ineptitude for putting a play together, but in ignorance of the public's

feelings. That is a fault which time will remedy. It is not a fault at all, so far as the art of dramaturgy is concerned. But it is a deadly fault in point of commercial success. So perhaps Mr. Stayton will bear with me for a few moments of instruction. I find no fault with the outline of his idea. Two married women simultaneously receiving home their husbands who have been in another part of the world for a period of eleven years or so; one of the married women mistaking in the twilight the other's husband for her own, and being similarly mistaken by him; a passionate embrace, electric light turned on, mutual embarrassment; later, the woman's discovery that her actual husband is utterly unsuited to her, and the man's discovery that his actual wife is utterly unsuited to him; and their common discovery that they are both perfectly suited to each other; and the doubt whether or not they had better elope. Quite a promising scheme, I think. But it is spoiled (remember that I speak commercially to Mr. Stayton) by the manner in which it has been filled in. Obviously, the sympathy of the audience is claimed for the two lovers. The audience is expected to feel with them the unkindness of the fate which mated them apart, and of the conventions which keep them asunder. But, in order that the audience may come up to the scratch, there must be cast at least a rudimentary halo of nobility around the pair, while the other husband and the

other wife must appear comparatively bestial. Mr. Stayton has not taken these precautions. He, in the face of a moral public, has drawn no moral difference between the would-be sympathetic characters and the would-be antipathetic. Nay! he has left the latter far better off morally than the former. His plea for the former he bases entirely on æsthetic grounds: Mrs. Willoughby dresses smartly, and has kept her figure, whereas Mrs. Brandram is rather untidy and rather stout. True, they both inhabit the same set of flats in West Kensington, but that is merely for dramatic convenience: in mode of life they are leagues asunder. Mr. Brandram, again, wears a large beard and a shapeless ulster, and orders a glass of milk and a bun. How very different from clean-shaven, well-coated Mr. Willoughby, with his cry for a tankard of ale! But, Mrs. Brandram is a sweet-natured and affectionate wife and mother, and we have no reason to suppose that Mr. Willoughby is not a very good fellow. Mr. Brandram and Mrs. Willoughby have thus a merely snobbish grievance, and a merely snobbish affinity. They fall in love because they think each other "good form". Far be it from me to suggest that such a motive is unnatural or even rare. And far be it from me to suggest that snobbishness is a thing likely to be unintelligible in this island. But I do suggest, and insist, that in the theatre the English public cares much more for morality than for social distinctions,

and that it excuses a breach of morality only if the breach be made by strong sentimental passion. With such passion Mr. Brandram and Mrs. Willoughby have not been endowed by their creator. And therefore they win no sympathy at all. Such sympathy as there is goes all to that decent, homely pair, Mr. Willoughby and Mrs. Brandram, who, if they said to each other "What a pity it is that we two comfortable, genial, honest souls should be tied to those two maundering snobs!" and if they forthwith eloped together, would not, I do believe, be blamed by any one. But this kind of sympathy does not save a play. It is no use to have the audience pulling one way and the author another. There must be a sweet consensus.

A WELCOME PLAY

November 15, 1902.

I THINK "The Admirable Crichton" is quite the best thing that has happened, in my time, to the British stage. New ground has been broken before. But the breakage has ever been made too furtively to attract other miners, or too clumsily not to scare them back to the old congested camp; nor, indeed, has the new ground been invariably of the kind that is worth breaking. Keen, then, is my gladness that Mr. Barrie has broken triumphantly, in the eyes of all men, the very ground whose infinite possibilities I have in these columns boomed so long and wistfully. Had the play been written by a tiro, Mr. Frohman would have deserved all our thanks for his courage in producing it. But it needed no courage to produce a play by Mr. Barrie. Is not he established as the prime purveyor of "a good cry"? And was not it quite certain that the whole tear-loving public would come flocking from "Quality Street" to "The Admirable Crichton" for long enough to insure the management against actual loss on the production? The only doubt was whether they would catch the intention of the latter play. It was on the cards that they might treat the butler-hero of it as an excruciatingly

pathetic figure, and weep floods of tears over his ultimate fate. In that case, so much the better for the box-office. As it happened, the public seemed on the first night really to understand what Mr. Barrie was driving at, and seemed to delight in his meaning and his method. Not even the interminable entr'actes, due to a strike of stage carpenters, affected the consensus. Always, when a terrified gentleman in evening dress comes before the curtain, and apologises for delays, and appeals to "the British love of fair play," he may absolutely rely on a rapturous salvo from the cosmopolosemitics who make up two-thirds of a first-night audience. But the other third, composed of unflattered Britons, is apt to be rather brutal. Not a sound of brutality assailed the apologist at the Duke of York's. Innumerable last trains were lost without a murmur. Thence my glad deduction that the public is ripe for the drama of modern fantasy.

You might, of course, remind me that the public is unripe for any other kind of drama. It is undeniable that the most successful modern plays are those which are most fantastically untrue to real life. But Mr. Barrie's play differs from them in that it is frankly, and of a purpose, untrue to life. Here we have impossible people, dressed in the fashion of to-day, doing impossible things, and yet (what a relief!) we are not asked to take them seriously (though, as I shall show, there is a quite serious side

to them). In the first act, we are not quite in key. Force of habit is too strong for us, and we object that if a nobleman invited his servants to tea once a month, the good breeding of his sons and daughters would enable them to carry the thing off gracefully: they would not, at least, behave as do the sons and daughters of Lord Loam. Also, we object that all Lord Loam's servants (except Crichton, the philosophic butler) belong to a bygone generation—the generation before board-schools. We are not yet attuned to the fantasy, do not yet see the point of the fable. For the play is fable as well as fantasy. It is not, like the "New Arabian Nights," which in many ways it resembles, a mere farcical distortion of modern actuality. It is formed and conditioned by a philosophic idea which bears on a problem of modern life—the problem of domestic service. Slavery was justified by Aristotle on the ground that a certain proportion of men are born with servile natures. "Quite so," says Mr. Barrie, "but *which* men?" He proceeds to show that servility is merely a matter of environment, and that the most servile of slaves may become, in a place where there is free competition, the most masterly of masters, and vice versa. This may not strike you as in itself a startlingly new idea. But it is startlingly new for the theatre. It has been circulating in the outer world only during the past five years or so. It never occurred to us before we began to realise the results of compulsory education.

Our slaves are still servile enough, superficially, but we know that many of them are in all respects our superiors. And we feel very guilty and uncomfortable in their presence. We have given to them, and cannot now take away from them, the power to meet us and beat us on our own ground; and who knows how soon they will have the courage to exercise that power? Crichton, the butler, is the type — the fantastically faked type — of these potential monsters blindly created by us. So soon as the Loam family is stranded with him on a desert island, he becomes absolute master of them all. He has not changed in any inherent sense, nor have they. The difference is merely the difference of locality. There is no longer that veneer of custom and tradition which alone prevented Crichton from asserting himself at first. Mr. Barrie might have made us more uncomfortable if, when the Loam family was rescued by a warship and taken home, Crichton had retained something of his influence. As it is, Crichton retires gracefully to a public-house at "the fashionable end" of the Harrow Road, much as Prince Florizel of Bohemia (whom I hope now to see some day upon the stage) retired to a cigar divan in Rupert Street. Nor does the ironic invention mar the logic of Mr. Barrie's lesson. It merely enables even the most thoughtful and nervous of us to smile. Mr. Barrie has always been able to amuse us. But this is the first occasion on which he has succeeded in making us also think.

And so he will excuse me for having insisted on the meaning of a play whose chief charm, from first to last, is in the uproarious fun of it.

Bestowing not on Mr. Barrie's name (nor, indeed, on his own) the giddy benefit of capital letters or separate line, " Charles Frohman presents

Miss Irene Vanbrugh

and

Mr. H. B. Irving

in " Mr. Barrie's modest little effort. The form of the announcement is roughly significant of the relative commercial value of mimes and dramatists on the other side (perhaps, too, on this side) of the Atlantic Ocean. But it is rather hard on the two " stars," of whose general lustre and magnitude Mr. Barrie here takes but slight advantage. Neither of them is allowed to shine with more than a modest radiance among the rest, and the authentic " star " of the evening is a no greater person than small-typed, smuggled-in " J. M. Barrie " himself. Admirable is Mr. H. B. Irving, as Crichton, for his air of dignity and authority, and admirable for the appropriate solemnity with which he takes the ironic humour of the part. He is clearly cut out to play the aforesaid Florizel. The only fault in his present performance is a fault of omission: Crichton ought surely to betray an occasional trace of a cockney accent. That he shall be, in our eyes,

socially as inferior to his servants on the island as to his employers in England is not less important a point than that throughout he shall seem to us morally and intellectually superior to them. Mr. Irving seems to be socially the equal of the Loam family throughout. And thus something of the irony implicit in the family's subjection is lost for us. His love-scene with Lady Mary, his chivalrous determination to raise her to his own (insular) social position, would be much funnier, and more significant, if there were between the two characters the difference of tone that marks the plebeian from the aristocrat. That Mr. Irving made himself too distinguished was the more a pity for that Miss Irene Vanbrugh, as Lady Mary, made herself too little so. When an actress succeeds signally in one part, she is told evermore by the critics that she has not yet ridded herself of that part's influence. Often this charge is quite unjust—a mere parrot-cry. But it does seem to me that Miss Irene Vanbrugh has indeed not yet shed the slough of Miss Sophie Fullgarney. She lacks the repose that once was hers. She is always making little skittish efforts, nodding and becking and wreathing smiles out of season. All these tricks were right and proper in the portrayal of such a young person as Miss Fullgarney. But the part of Lady Mary needs the quietism of good breeding, to bring out its irony and the irony of the whole theme. Miss Vanbrugh should live among poppies for a while.

MR. BARRETT AS KING ALFRED

December 27, 1902.

"ELUSIVE" is not, perhaps, the obvious epithet for Mr. Wilson Barrett. Yet, despite the strength and substance of his being, he is the most elusive creature that ever came to baffle the poor intelligence of mankind. When we see him in a modern play, purporting to be a merchant or a barrister or some other familiar modern type, we protest that it is impossible to accept him as such. He is not of our time, we say, but rather a throw-back to some erst glorious and now fallen, forgotten empire of the past. For us that lucent top-hat perches as an accident on his brow, hiding a yet more lucent diadem of barbaric gems. His frock-coat is buttoned across harness of gold and silver. Superficially like a walking stick, that which he bears in his right hand is a curiously-wrought sceptre. From no hansom or four-wheeler has he just alighted, but from some high-pooped galley. His talk is not as our talk, and his walk is in time to some strange music made from shawms and sackbuts by a thousand virgin slaves. Of the truck of our sordid world he is all ignorant, all unconscious. An old-time tyrant, he.

Now, Mr. Barrett does not always appear in plays

of modern life. Often he favours some quite remotely antique period. Herein, we are sure, our awe of him will not be tempered by sense of anachronism. But we ought never to be sure of anything in regard to Mr. Barrett. Antique in modernity, he appears not less modern in antiquity. The resources of the costumier's wardrobe avail him nothing. Lightly or heavily clad, according to the fashion of the period required, he is yet altogether of our own time. His voice, his port, his manner, all have a contemporary ring. A tyrant he is still, but a familiar tyrant. True, the form of tyranny suggested by him varies from scene to scene. Sometimes we think of an eloquent Nonconformist divine swaying his congregation; at other times of a headmaster "taking" the fourth form; at other times, of a magistrate reading the Riot Act. But whatever form of tyranny he suggest to us at the moment, the form is always a modern one. And thus, whether he appear in ancient or modern garb, Mr. Barrett is always an august anachronism—a whale out of water. The truth is, of course, that himself is neither ancient nor modern: he seems one or the other only by force of the contrast with whichever thing he try to seem. He belongs, really, to no time at all. There is not, and never was, any one to resemble him. That is the secret of his hold on us.

He is now on view at the Adelphi Theatre, enacting the title-part of a play written by himself—"The

Christian King, or Alfred of Engle-land". The play is conceived in a large spirit, and is, I hope, the first of a series in which Mr. Barrett will deal with all those English Kings whom Shakespeare left unexploited. The play has, at least, one very real merit. It is inspired by a serious effort to show us the greatness of a great man. Mr. Barrett tries to show us the great man, not (as is the usual case) involved in some love affair merely, or making merely a picturesque background to some one else's love affair, but actually doing the things on which depends his reputation for greatness—planning campaigns, transacting affairs of State, and so forth. True, the effort does not quite come off. The task of making us fully realise in the theatre the genius of any great man can come off only if the dramatist himself be, in his own line, an equally great man. Mr. Barrett's greatness is a greatness rather of personality than of dramatic invention. Unimpressive, for instance, is the scene in which Alfred cross-examines a lady whom he suspects of attempting to poison another lady. "Why did you put poison in that cup?" asks Alfred. "I didn't," says the lady. "You did," says Alfred. "I didn't," repeats the lady. "You did," repeats Alfred. We feel that Alfred is not doing himself justice—not revealing that intellectual potency with which Mr. Frederic Harrison and other admirers have credited him. Spiritually, too, he leaves something to be desired. "Tell King

Guthrum," he cries, "that Alfred of Engle-land will meet him in the field—meet and defeat him." The Scandinavian to whom he entrusts this message is a man of spirit, who declares that, on the contrary, Alfred's own doom is at hand. Alfred is inexpressibly shocked: "Sir," says he, "that shall be as God wills." But why thus rebuke the messenger for overlooking a point which had just been overlooked by himself? Years ago, in statu pupillari, I knew a youth who was ploughed three or four times in the Divinity school. As he was destined for holy orders, this was a serious matter for him. And, every time he failed, after reading very hard for that very simple affair, he impressed me by his pious acquiescence in what he declared to have been decreed from above. The impression thus produced on me was nullified by him when, at length, he succeeded in passing his examination. His talk was all of having "romped through"—"floored the examiners"—"no mistake about it this time". Even as to that undergraduate, so to Alfred seems it that he need hold Providence accountable only for his misfortunes. Not an edifying theory!

The Alfred whom Mr. Barrett has created is not nearly so grand a person as the Alfred whom Mr. Barrett impersonates. And yet I fancy that the former has more than the latter in common with the Alfred of actual history. The latter, as I have suggested, seems to belong to our own age. When

he seals up a letter and says to the bearer of it "If he be not at home, search till you find him, and bring a written answer to this my message," we feel (despite the exquisite archaicism of the words) that he has rung up a messenger-boy after failing to "get through" on the telephone. Again, the actual Alfred was essentially English—or so we imagine him to have been. Mr. Barrett speaks the English language with perfect fluency, and may, so far as I know, be of purely English extraction. But to me he gives the impression of being unbounded by any nationality. He transcends place, even as he transcends time. Infinity and eternity are his.

He takes infinite pains to put us at our ease. Even as in a previous play he entered bearing a lamb (or was it a sheep?) in his arms, so now, when he first appears, he lays a caressing hand on two handsome deer-hounds. One of his retainers has already been made to say, reassuringly, "He has the tenderest and most considerate heart I wot of." And, in case these precautions be inadequate, Mr. Barrett proceeds to hold a long and tenderly facetious conversation with a little ragged child. But, somehow, the more he tries not to overawe us, the more are we overawed. When he says of his kingship "I dare not hope that I shall fill the rôle," his modesty seems more terrific than any amount of bluster. And in his relation to the two ladies who appear in the play he overwhelms

us utterly. One of them is a good lady, the other a bad lady. The good one is a blonde, the bad one a brunette. The bad one appears with a hawk—a stuffed hawk—on her wrist, the good one with a dove—a real live dove—in the hollow of her hand. They both love Alfred simultaneously. And Alfred loves them both in succession. But what an Olympian lover he is! Jove himself, condescending to this or that nymph or mortal, cannot have had more of the grand manner. It is true that Alfred leaves off loving the bad lady in time to save himself from misconduct, and marries the good lady in due form. But the romance is pervaded by a subtle odour of mythology.

Sometimes I suspect Mr. Barrett himself of being a myth.

THE INVARIABLE BADNESS OF AMATEUR ACTING

January 24 and 31, 1903.

THERE is much to be said for the amateur in other arts. There is nothing to prevent us from taking him quite seriously. His work, at its best, or even at its second best, yields us a quality of pleasure which we could not win elsewhere.

As "amateur" is a rather dubious word, let me explain that I mean by it one who practises an art by the way, as a recreation from some other kind of work, or as a recreation from leisure, and not with any need of emolument from it, nor devoting to it his whole life. Work done with this motive, done under these conditions, may often be trivial, but it never can be vulgar. Professionalism is a very dangerous thing. It tempts a man to accept a popular standard, and to ignore his own standard of what is right and wrong in his art— to aim at what passes muster, not at what himself thinks worthy. Necessitating, moreover, not merely constant labour but also constant output, professionalism tends to foster a fatal fluency, enabling a man to say anything anyhow, robbing him, at length, of the power to express anything from himself. From such dangers the amateur is safe.

Working solely for his own pleasure, he is not seduced into doing less than his best for sake of a public which does not exact, or positively will have none of, his best. Under no contract to stand and deliver at stated hours, he can linger over his work as long as ever he care to. He need take no short cuts to sufficiency. He may tread, with deliberate footsteps, the high-road to perfection. He never acquires a cheap ready-made knowledge of "how to do things". Thus he must always be finding out for himself how a thing—how on earth even the easiest, most obvious thing—can be done. And thus the way, when he finds it, is his own way; so that even the easiest, most obvious thing achieved by him has some distinction, some personal flavour and significance. Some beauty, belike, too; for his is "the hand of little employment" that "hath the daintier sense"—the lingering hand, delicately refining. The most exquisite work, in other arts than the art of acting, is always the work of an amateur.

Take an example. No one, I suppose, will dispute that in the art of writing prose the most exquisite work done in our time was the work of an amateur. Essentially an amateur was Walter Pater. There was no worldly need for him to write. Writing was his recreation, his way of enjoying himself. To the last, he was an amateur. And the peculiar value and beauty of his work came from the very fact that he was so amateurish. He never mastered,

because there was no need for him to master, the rudiments of writing as a business. He never could express anything off-hand. He had always to fumble and grope in the recesses of his consciousness before he could set down on paper the simplest thought. He had infinite leisure for fumbling and groping there before he need express thoughts more complicated. And thus it is that we have in his writing so exact and vivid a presentment of himself, and a beauty so distinct from any other kind of beauty that is known to us (except, of course, in the work of his disciples). Suppose that Pater had failed to win a Fellowship, and had come "down" to London, there to make worldly use of the specific instinct that was in him. Suppose that he had become a professional writer. And then try to imagine yourself reading with any pleasure such books as he might have left behind him. Pater not exquisite! A poor sort of Pater that would be.

I have taken in Pater, of course, a pre-eminent example—the kind of man bound to do pre-eminent work as an amateur. The average amateur has but little true impulse for the art which he pursues—nothing that is worth expressing, nor much of the gift for achieving a beautiful expression of it. His work does not matter much; but it has, at least, a kind of fragile charm and distinction. The faint reflection of a faint thing is better than the harsh reflection of nothing in particular. And the difference between those two reflections is the difference

between the work of the average amateur and the average professional.

Not that I would altogether decry professionalism. Its power for evil is not unlimited ; and it is to some extent a power for good. It kills only the exquisite talent. To that rarer phenomenon, genius, it is of real service. Pater was a great man in a small way, and professionalism would have been fatal to him ; but, had he been great in a great way, he would have been all the better for having to earn his bread by writing. Take the case of any absolutely great writer who has been beset by that necessity. Take, for example, Balzac. Had he had enough money to keep him in ease and comfort, had he not laden himself with that appalling load of debts, he would not have written more carefully than he did write. Merely, he would have written less. Professionalism is a kind of pump. It soon pumps out of a small artist what might have been valuable had it been expressed by the small artist, slowly, of his own accord. It does not, on the other hand, exhaust the great artist. It does but keep him in a constant state of effusion. How much leisure the great artist has for his work is a question which does not at all affect the quality of his work. He is so strongly himself that his hastiest work bears always his own authentic stamp. The great artist is always at his best. If ever he tried (and he never does try) to be exquisite, he would not succeed in being so. Exquisiteness is within the

reach only of certain smaller artists. And it is within their reach only when they are working as amateurs.

As in literature, so is it in painting and in music. For example—but oh, bother examples! Or rather, I beg you to take them on trust. I am a simple dramatic critic: I refuse to do more than make general assertions about music and painting. A priori, of course, one would expect that a rule deducible from the arts generally would hold good in the art of acting also. It is among amateur mimes that one would look to find the most delicate and various interpretation of finer shades of character. One would not look to find great tragic acting, or even great comedic acting. But one would expect, at least, a certain exquisite subtlety in the portrayal of "character parts". The average professional mime offends us with his roughness and readiness. His experience is such that he never has to think anything out freshly for himself. He repeats mechanically the tricks which he has played before, and which, maybe, he had picked up, in the first instance, from other mimes. If he is one who confines himself to a single "line of business," he does the same thing, over and over again, in the same way. If he is "versatile," he does different things, over and over again, in the same way. Never is he the character as drawn by the author. Never is he even himself. He is but a tissue of tedious conventions. Now, the average

amateur has little or no experience. Therefore he must think for himself. A part is put into his hands, and he must excogitate what will be the best means of conveying his idea of it to the audience. And it is likely (on the analogy of the other arts) that he, if he have a true bent towards acting, will give a very original and delicate performance. Well, let us test these likelihoods by our experience of amateur acting. We have all, in our time, seen a good deal of amateur acting. For it is acting which has been in our time the most popular of the art-forms, and therefore the most ardently practised by the greatest number of amateurs. In the early part of this century, poetry bore away the palm. So pervasive was the force of Byron that thousands of ladies and gentlemen, who else would never have thought of rhyming love to dove, began to scribble innumerable verses in innumerable albums. Then came Queen Victoria, who was no poet, but was fond of sketching in water-colour. Forthwith, the albums were laid aside, and easels were set up in their stead, and the faltering fingers that had been stained with violet ink were now stained with moist paints. Later came Jenny Lind, and the genteel world sketched no more in water-colour, but warbled. Last of all came Mr. Henry Irving; and the genteel world ceased to warble, and began to act, and has been acting ever since. Acting, indeed, has had, and still has, a greater vogue than came to any of the other art-

forms. For, in a sense, it is the easiest of them all. Not every one can write a metrical line, or draw a straight line, or sing a note in tune. But any one who is not dumb and paralysed can come and speak a few lines across a row of footlights, and can imagine that he is speaking them rather nicely. The greater the number of amateurs, of course, the greater the number of duffers. But there is no reason to suppose that among even the greatest number there will not be some persons of real skill and talent. And yet, and yet, did any one of us ever behold an amateur mime whom he could praise without insincerity, or whose performance seemed comparable with even the worst professional performance? None of us ever beheld that amateur mime. Why?

That the vast majority of amateur mimes should merely flounder does not, of course, surprise me. What else should they do? They go in for private theatricals, not with any inward impulse for the art of acting, but just for the fun of the thing, as a variation from the common round of amusements in country-houses. As on the professional stage, so on the amateur stage, the conditions foster a certain freedom between the sexes, and many amateur mimes regard their art less as an end in itself than as a means to flirtation. In such diversions as sport or gambling there can be no sexual element. A woman who rides to hounds, or goes out with the guns, is doing a mannish thing, and

ceasing, for the time, to be a woman. She does not distract attention from the fox or the birds, and presumably does not seek to distract it: she, too, is exclusively a minister of death. Similarly, when men and women play cards, their aim is to win one another's money; and this stern enterprise precludes any kind of dalliance. But in rehearsing a play there is nothing to prevent, and much to encourage, a tender familiarity. There is nothing to make either the man forget his manhood or the woman her womanhood. And the fact that the man is impersonating by the way another man, and the woman another woman, creates for them a vague sense of greater freedom and less responsibility. Innumerable other motives there are by which amateur mimes are made. A middle-aged man told me, the other day, that he had taken to amateur acting because of an accident which had slightly injured his eyesight. He had no longer been able to shoot straight, and consequently there had been a heavy fall in the quantity and quality of his invitations. As he was a bachelor, and not very rich, and fond of the country, and gregarious, this had been for him a serious matter. And so he had taken counsel with himself, had thrown himself enthusiastically into the art of acting, and had now won his way back to the favour he had forfeited. "I know I can't act for nuts," he said. "But then, *they* can't act for nuts, either. So what does it matter?" Perhaps a real efficiency in acting

would be as disastrous for him as had been his crooked shooting.

Not many amateur mimes are, like this gentleman, conscious of their own defects. And this brings me to one of the solutions for their mysterious badness. They are never told—never told personally—how bad they are, or even that they are not very good indeed. I know that the professional mimes get very little in the way of frank criticism. The average critic finds far greater difficulty in understanding the rudiments of acting than in understanding even the intricacies of dramaturgy. So he takes the safe course of peppering every cast with such epithets as "manly," "sincere," "polished," "sympathetic". In his opinion, what the leading man does is always "perhaps the best thing he has yet done"; and "nothing could" ever "be better than the performance of" the leading lady; and even the small fry always give "valuable assistance" and (as though one might expect them to be treacherous) "loyal help". Nevertheless, there are a few critics who really can (and dare) discriminate bad from good acting. And for these critics the performers have a wholesome respect, and from them learn many wholesome lessons in their art. The amateurs, on the other hand, move in an atmosphere of untainted adulation. Their friends, and their servants, and their villagers, vie with one another in loudness of applause. And even the expert

dramatic critic never dreams of being anything but dulcet. Of course, he is not often there at all. Books by amateurs are published, and paintings by amateurs are exhibited, and so are criticised by the experts. But (thank Heaven!) private theatricals are nearly always given in private or remote places, and the expert escapes them. Now and again, however, Fate drops him into one of these private or remote places. And he, basely, does not attempt to improve the occasion by telling the truth. Last year, a well-known expert went to stay at a house in ——shire. His hostess was a lady of much lustre and importance in the county. The expert, when he arrived, found her rehearsing a play. It appeared that the rector of the village church had set his heart on an east-window, and that his appeal for subscriptions had not had a very hearty response. So the expert's hostess had organised a theatrical entertainment, to be given in aid of the fund. Two playlets, of an old-fashioned and unpretentious kind, were to be enacted in the village schoolroom. In each of them the expert's hostess had assigned to herself the leading part. This she had done, not because she had ever acted before, nor because she had any great wish to act now, but rather because she owed it to her position not to appear in a subordinate capacity even on the stage. Her husband disapproved strongly of the whole scheme. It was only under strong protest that he attended the performance. The expert

happened to be sitting next to him; and the notion that the husband was with difficulty repressing his contempt and mortification made it the more difficult for the expert to repress his own hysterical mirth at what was passing on the stage. The helpless awkwardness of the untried amateur is not in itself amusing; but when it is brought into an even conflict with the dignity and easy grace of a great lady moving in her own sphere of influence, the result (according to the expert) is something quite irresistibly droll and delightful. Throughout the evening, the husband sat silent. When the curtain fell, he turned to the expert and said, in perfect seriousness and good faith, "Well, I never could have believed it. Of course, she can't do anything really great in such parts as those. Nobody could. But I should like to see her as—well, say as 'La Dame aux Camélias.'" Later, the expert found himself saying to his hostess, for want of anything better to say, "I should like very much to see you as 'La Dame aux Camélias.' It is a part that would suit you." The other day, he heard that the rector was agitating for a new font, and that "La Dame aux Camélias" was in rehearsal.

Certainly, the absence of criticism is one of the blights on amateur acting. But the real mischief lies deeper. It is inherent in the art of acting. Acting is essentially a public art. A man might paint or write, with some pleasure, on a desert island. But he could not act there. Not less than

the orator, the actor must have an audience to work on. Now, it were no great gratification to an orator to address none but small and select audiences, even if these audiences were composed of finely critical persons. The fact that his work does not endure beyond the moment of its performance makes it essential for him to be heard at large. Similarly, the man who has any real impulse for acting will not be satisfied with private or semi-private triumphs—would not be satisfied by them even if the private or semi-private audiences were composed of finely critical persons, and not of persons who applaud with equal enthusiasm whatever he may happen to do. Such triumphs may be gratifying enough to the vanity of the duffer. But the man who feels that he has it in him to act will crave for a wider field. To that wider field he cannot attain if he continue to be an amateur actor. Consequently, he becomes a professional actor as soon as ever he can. And thus the amateur stage is always automatically deprived of such persons as might, if they tarried on it, become its ornaments. Only the duffers tarry on it.

KIPLING'S ENTIRE

February 14, 1903.

"GEORGE FLEMING" is, as we know, a lady. Should the name Rudyard Kipling, too, be put between inverted commas? Is it, too, the veil of a feminine identity? If of Mr. Kipling we knew nothing except his work, we should assuredly make that conjecture. A lady who writes fiction reveals her sex clearlier through her portrayal of men than through any other of her lapses. And in Mr. Kipling's short stories, especially in "The Light that Failed" (that elongated short story which "George Fleming" has now adapted to the stage), men are portrayed in an essentially feminine manner, and from an essentially feminine point of view. They are men seen from the outside, or rather, not seen at all, but feverishly imagined. If to a lady who writes fiction you declare that men are not as she draws them, she will say (or, at least, think) that if they are not they ought to be. Mr. Kipling would say or think likewise about his own men. "*My* men—*my* men!" cries Dick Helder when a regiment of soldiers passes his window. He is not their commanding officer. He was at one time a war-correspondent. He is now blind, and his cry is wrung from him by his anguish in not being able

to see what was to him the fairest sight on earth. He had always doted on the military. And so has Mr. Kipling. To him, as to his hero, they typify, in its brightest colours, the notion of manhood, manliness, man. And by this notion Mr. Kipling is permanently and joyously obsessed. That is why I say that his standpoint is feminine. The ordinary male fictionist has a knowledge of men as they are, but is preoccupied by a sentiment for women as he supposes them to be. The ordinary female fictionist has a knowledge of women as they are, but is preoccupied by a sentiment for men as she supposes them to be. (Between these two propositions lies the reason why so little of our fiction can be taken seriously.) Mr. Kipling is so far masculine that he has never displayed a knowledge of women as they are; but the unreality of his male creatures, with his worship of them, makes his name ring quaintly like a pseudonym.

In men's novels you will find, for the most part, that virility is taken for granted. The male characters are men, and, so far as their creator can see, there's an end of the matter. But, for a creatrix, there's only just the beginning of the matter. She *insists* that her male characters are men. That is a lurid fact which she herself constantly remembers, "and don't you," she seems to say to her reader, "forget it." The point is laboured by her both in the first person and through the lips of the male characters themselves. Into whatever circum-

stances of joy or sorrow she cast them, always they are acutely conscious of their manhood and acutely nervous of being mistaken for women. However urgent the other calls made by Fate on their attention, always they keep the corners of their eyes on the mirror, to assure themselves that their moustaches are bristling, and their chests expanding, and their pipes "drawing," satisfactorily. They are never quite sure of themselves. They tremble at the sound of their own footsteps, fearing that the soles of their boots are not heavy enough. In ever-present dread of a sudden soprano note in the bass, they tremble at the sound of their own voices. They would beware of talking much, even were they sure of their lungs. They must, at all costs, be laconic, taciturn, as becomes men. Their language must be strong but sparse. No babbling fountains must they be, but volcanoes of whose inner fires we are to catch through infrequent cracks terrific glimpses. In real life, men are not like that. At least, only the effeminate men are like that. The others have no preoccupation with manliness. They don't bother about it. That is the difference between them and the male creatures of female writers. It is, also, precisely, the difference between them and the male creatures of Mr. Kipling. Manliness on the one hand, manlydom on the other. Manlydom: find for me, if you can, a word more apt to Mr. Kipling's heroes.

Strange that these heroes, with their self-conscious

blurtings of oaths and slang, their cheap cynicism about the female sex, their mutual admiration for one another's display of all those qualities which women admire in men, were not, as they so obviously seem to have been, fondly created out of the inner consciousness of a lady-novelist. There are, however, some respects wherein they differ from the heroes whom the average lady-novelist has made so painfully familiar to us. Women are rather squeamish, for the most part, and, though they idolise in men the strength which has been denied to themselves, they shrink from the notion of its excess. Brutality of word or deed is a notion which affrights them. Their heroes are never brutal. The oaths and the slang and the cynicism are kept beyond the confines of coarseness. There is always a certain atmosphere of gentility. And thus the ingenious commentator of the future will perhaps be saved from the fallacy (to which otherwise he would fall surely victim) that "Rudyard Kipling" was a lady's pseudonym. For Mr. Kipling is nothing—never was anything—if not unsqueamish. The ugly word, the ugly action, the ugly atmosphere—for all these he has an inevitable scent; and the uglier they be, the keener seems his relish of them. Strength, mere strength, is not enough to make a hero for him: his hero must be also a brute and a bounder. Writing of George Sand, Mr. Henry James once suggested that she, though she may have been to all intents and

purposes a man, was not a gentleman. Conversely, it might be said that Mr. Kipling, as revealed to us in his fiction, is no lady. But he is not the less essentially feminine for that.

No one but himself, I should have thought, could so adapt his peculiar fiction to the stage that nothing of its flavour were lost. As he was averse from dramaturgy, the point was for him to select the second best person for the job. No man need have applied: only a woman could preserve the point of view. And it seemed likely that the point of view could be preserved in its entirety by no woman who had not spent her life in the fish-market of Billingsgate. Such women are averse from dramaturgy. And so, in course of time, the job fell to "George Fleming," in whom are the two qualifications that she is a woman and a clever dramatist, and the one disqualification that she has a charming and fastidious talent. Of her two qualifications she has made very good use, and she has contrived, somehow, to triumph temporarily over her one disqualification. Examining her script with a fresh eye, she must have been surprised (and pained) by its fidelity to the original. All the atmosphere is there—an atmosphere charged pungently with the triple odour of beer, baccy and blood. And in this atmosphere the characters speak that abrupt jargon of alternate meiosis and hyperbole which is Mr. Kipling's literary style. It is wonderful, too, how exactly Miss Fletcher has caught the "way of a

man with a maid " as conceived by Mr. Kipling. " I want you, Maisie—I want you badly " sounds rather like the echo of a coon-song, but it is also good Kiplingese. And " You're a woman, Maisie, from the top of your dear little head to the toes of your blessed little boots " is Kiplingese of the purest kind, inconfusible with any other kind of vulgarity. In some passages Miss Fletcher has " lifted " the dialogue verbatim. It is a pity that she has omitted Dick's immortal description of his inamorata as " a bilious little thing ". You remember that he was walking in Kensington Gardens, meditating on Maisie's lonely life, wondering whether she took proper care of herself. It occurred to him that perhaps she did not eat regular meals. For some girls, he reflected, this would not matter, " but," he cried in an agony of tenderness, " Maisie's a bilious little thing." In the dramatic version, much of this soliloquy reappears as an address to Maisie; but, somehow the immortal phrase has dropped out of it. " You're a bilious little thing, Maisie " is a line that we listen for eagerly and in vain. We miss, too, that scene in which Dick gloats eloquently over the traces of physical disease on the face of a middle-aged editor (or was it a picture-dealer?) who has called on him with a view to cheating him out of some money due for work done. And we miss, above all, that night-scene in the armoured train, when Dick, after blindness has overtaken him, ecstatically yells to

the soldiers who have been ordered to fire the machine-gun on some skirmishing Arabs, "Give 'em Hell, men—oh, give 'em Hell." Sad not to have heard that noble heart-cry uttered on the stage—a heart-cry so inalienably characteristic of the Kipling hero. Still, despite these and other omissions, Miss Fletcher has given us a marvellously close adaptation of the book. The play she offers us is a frothing draught of the authentic brew. It is Kipling's Entire. I raise my glass, and, in Kiplingesque parlance, "I looks towards" Miss Fletcher, but with a look that is meant to convey reproach.

Men are less pliant than women. Mr. Forbes Robertson cannot, try as he will, throw off that air of distinction and nobility so inconsistent with the Kipling ideal of manlydom. As Dick Helder, he may be likened to a stag in a baboon's skin. Some of the other actors in the cast, by dint of much growling and grunting and scowling and lumbering, come within measurable distance of the ideal.

A "DREARY" PLAY

May 2, 1903.

TEN years ago it was the fashion to call "unwholesome" any play which presented sincerely a not altogether jolly side of life. Well, the critics who encouraged such plays, and who were supposed to discourage any other kind of plays, have not drooped and died, one after another, to prove the aptness of the epithet. They are still among us, not apparently ailing. So another epithet has been hit on—"dreary," to wit. "Dreary" was much bandied last Monday afternoon, at the Imperial Theatre, in the entr'actes of "The Good Hope". Ten years ago, the emergents into the foyer would have been angrily grimacing, gasping for what they would have called "a whiff of fresh air," and complaining of (a favourite phrase, then) "a nasty taste in the mouth". Last Monday, they merely looked glum. One of them, regarding me with a faint twinkle in an otherwise lack-lustre eye, asked "Is this dreary enough for you?" I assured him that I was enjoying myself immensely. And so I was. Indeed, I had hardly ever felt so happy, so braced-up and buoyant, in a theatre. True, the play was a tragedy, and a very horrible one at that. But I do not see how it could produce a feeling of dreariness, and

could fail to produce a definitely tonic effect, on any person capable of intelligent æsthetic pleasure. One salient defect of the average Englishman is that he is incapable of such pleasure. If a work of art remind him of cheerful things in real life, he is exhilarated; if of cheerless things, he is downcast. The reminder of cheerful things may be dully given. That does not matter to him. The reminder of cheerless things may be given beautifully, strongly, and therefore joyously. That does not matter to him. For he was born inartistic.

There, I take it, is the reason why our drama is so weak in modern tragedies—the reason why, if the artistic few wish to see a modern tragedy, they have to import it from France or Germany or elsewhere. I do not suppose that we have in England no man capable of writing as fine a tragedy as that which Hermann Heijermans has written. But I do know that such a play as "The Good Hope," produced publicly, would be in England as signal a failure as it has been a success in Holland. And therefore (since, by the nature of his work, the dramatist, more than any other artist, needs encouragement) such a play is not written. Not from every kind of tragedy does our public flinch. It will tolerate Shakespearian tragedy, because it is not thereby reminded of realities. It will sometimes tolerate even a modern tragedy, for there is a way of writing modern tragedy without trenching on anything within our actual experience. A playwright can

take a tragic theme from real life, and found a play on it, and yet make his characters and his atmosphere so unreal that no offence is given. No offence, did I say? Nay, very great pleasure. Our public loves to cry, to cry copiously, so long as its tears are not shed over something that is not a quite palpable figment. I can imagine a really popular British play made from the very same materials that Heijermans used for "The Good Hope". The title itself is promising. Nor is the theme unfamiliar or unwelcome. Fisherfolk, living their lives in a constant tussle with the elements, are part and parcel of our national romance. "Men must work and women must weep"—"They who go down to the sea in ships"—"For those in peril on the sea"—does not every one of our households contain, somewhere, at least one engraving or oleograph to illustrate these phrases? Well we know them, those impossibly young and buxom wives, standing on rocks, shading their eyes with their hands, seawards, while their tresses stream becomingly in the gale from beneath their sou'westers, and their impossibly old and decrepit grandfathers in the foreground crouch prayerfully so as not to obstruct our tear-dimmed vision of neat ankles. Long and well have we known them pictorially; long and well on the stage, also. It is strange with how slight ingenuity might the exact situation chosen by Heijermans be turned into the kind of play that has often enriched our own

dramatists. Take the principal characters: pathetic "lead," a very woman whose husband and two of whose sons were drowned years ago; hero, one of her surviving sons, a handsome, daring fellow, recently dismissed from the Navy, and sentenced to a term of imprisonment, for knocking down a superior officer who had foully slandered the heroine; heroine, a bonny, high-spirited girl, cousin of hero, loving him dearly, dearly loved by him; villain, wealthy shipowner, who heavily insures and sends to sea vessels which he knows to be un-sea-worthy; comic relief, younger brother of hero, a coward, afraid of the sea, anxious to get employment on land. All these characters are ranged before us in the course of the first act. The villain compliments the heroine on her good looks, and hints at his own sensuality. In the second act the hero, after making many verbal scores off the villain, whom he regards as a lazy tyrant, puts out to sea in a vessel which we know to be doomed. Here are all the makings of a successful British drama. It seems almost superfluous to indicate how the successful British dramatist would deal with them. Of course, the villain would in the third act renew his odious advances to the heroine, and be repulsed indignantly. Later would come the news that the vessel had gone down with all hands aboard. The heroine, in deep mourning, would again repulse the villain, who, stung to fury, would boast that he had killed the hero on purpose, and would gloat over her

bereavement. She, in her turn, stung to fury, would stab him with a stray clasp-knife to which our attention had been previously drawn. And then—then there would be two courses open. If the successful British dramatist wished to increase his reputation for profound thought, the villain would be mortally wounded, and the curtain would fall on the heroine giving herself up to the police. The public would go weeping out of the theatre, but (for a reason which I have already explained) not really at all depressed or resentful. The other, and perhaps the safer way, would be for the villain to wrest the knife from the heroine's weak hand after receiving a very slight scratch, and to turn the weapon vindictively against her. The door would burst open. "Are you his ghost?" the villain would cry. "No," the hero would shout, "I am flesh and blood. Unhand her! I have swum ashore. Come to my arms, dearest. As for you, you scoundrel, you shall pay the penalty of your misdeeds. Constable! [*Enter constable*] You have here a warrant for this man's arrest, on the charge of murdering my shipmates. [*Exeunt constable and villain.*] And now, my darling, now that the clouds which overshadowed us have rolled away, and the glorious sunshine," &c. That were the way to make "The Good Hope" acceptable in England. It is, however, not at all the way Heijermans has gone about *his* business.

In the play, as it stands, there is practically no

love-interest. Very little stress is laid on the fact that Greet and his cousin Jo are lovers, and the tragedy of his death at sea is marked for us quite as much through the bereavement of his mother as through that of his betrothed. Nor, indeed, are we called on to weep for him especially. The fate of his brother, and of the rest of the crew, seems not less lamentable than his. No one character predominates much over another. There is practically no story. The play simply represents a typical episode in a little fishing village. Most of the characters are fisherfolk, possessing much the same peculiarities of temperament as we may find in the fisherfolk in Cornwall or elsewhere, and possessing none of the peculiarities of fisherfolk as seen by us on the stage. There is nothing consciously heroic about them. They are ordinary creatures, with certain modifications and exaggerations produced by their peculiar life. And herein lies one of the sharpest differences between the work of Heijermans and the work of any English dramatist. Heijermans has deigned to take a respectful interest in humble life, and shows to us humble people as they are, not as every fool knows them not to be. An English dramatist, having to show a group of peasants, would be content to multiply the conventional stage-peasant. In the group of peasants shown to us by Heijermans every one is distinct from another, and all are human beings, and all, moreover, are normal human beings. Equally real and normal

are the characters who do not happen to be peasants. I notice that some of my colleagues decry the ship-owner, Clemens Bos, as a conventional villain. Are they themselves so saturated with convention that they failed to notice that his hinted desire for Jo in the first act was not succeeded by persecution of her in the later acts? As a matter of fact, the man takes no further notice of the girl. To pretend that he is a conventional villain merely because he speculates in unseaworthy ships is to deny the possible existence in Holland of what the late Mr. Plimsoll proved to exist in England. Perhaps it was some vague memory of Mr. Plimsoll's crusade that led these critics into the deeper absurdity of decrying the play as "a pamphlet". Certainly, it is a criticism of certain things in life which the author holds to be horrible and unjust. In that sense it is a pamphlet. But it is also a very fine and scrupulous work of art. There is nothing incongruous in this duality. True, there is always the danger that an artist who is inspired by a moral purpose may distort life so as to make his moral the more striking. But he does not necessarily do so. Certainly, Heijermans has not done so. I wish that some of our so purely artistic dramatists could, through their coldly observant eyes, see life half as clearly and steadily as it is seen through the somewhat flashing eyes of Heijermans.

MR. MARTIN HARVEY AT ST. HELENA

May 16, 1903.

CAPTIVITY is dramatic or undramatic according to the nature of the captive. The fowler who ensnares from the empyrean an eagle, and coops him in a cage, is a purveyor of drama. Not only is our imagination stirred by the contrast between that boundless azure and these mean bars, and by the thought that one who was the tyrant and terror of his fellow-birds is turned now into a mere object for their pity, but also our sense of drama is stirred by the obviously active conflict between the eagle's soul and his lot. The eagle remembers, pines, rebels. He never surrenders his right to that wild throne from which man has by subtlety deposed him. He is as strong as ever he was on the divine right of eagles. Us he regards as vile conspirators against heaven, and there is a world of scorn for us in the dim glare of his steadfast yellow eyes. His spirit never breaks, though himself wastes away, with moulting feathers and wings atrophied. Regard yonder canary. He, too, is a pathetic figure, when we come to think of it. Had he his rights, he would be even now fluttering from sunlit branch to branch of whatever tropical trees best pleased

his fancy. Only, he has surrendered his rights. He has adapted himself, quite agreeably, to durance vile. He enjoys his little cold bath every morning. From perch to perch he flutters, all day long, piping servile notes to his gaolers, and pecking with servile relish at the groundsel that they thrust contemptuously between the bars. Perhaps he is a philosopher. Perhaps he is only a fool. In either case, he is not at all dramatic. His behaviour precludes that sense of conflict without which drama cannot begin to be for us. We incline to the theory that he is a fool. We do not, however (to use a famous distinction) think him a damned fool. And how, except as a damned fool, could we regard an eagle that were behaving in his manner? Imagine a caged eagle pirouetting, and cocking his head coquettishly to one side, and feeding from our hand, and entertaining us with whatever vocal noises are made by eagles at large, and generally exhibiting the Christian qualities of resignation and cheerfulness, as a lesson to us all. We should not be edified. We should but say "This bird is undramatic; and, worse, he is undramatically ridiculous."

Let us take now the case of a human captive. Perhaps because Jupiter's bird was the minister of his sufferings, Prometheus springs into my memory. Why is it that Prometheus Bound is so finely dramatic a theme? It is because his spirit, though his limbs were bound to the rock, was still unfettered. It is because he was for ever indignant, unrepentant,

undaunted. His spirit never was broken. He was always writhing and wrenching for freedom, and, had he freed himself indeed, would again have scaled Olympus and therefrom filched some other element desirable for mankind. And thus he is the eternally dramatic symbol of the conflict between soaring personal genius and the dull general force that hates it and overpowers it. Now, suppose that Prometheus, on his rock, shrugging his shoulders as far as his chains would permit him, had acquiesced in the gods' verdict. Suppose his sentiments had been merely a distaste for the cramped monotony of his life, and a regret that he was not still lightly at large. Suppose him, if you can, saying "tweet" to the eagle. Then in all history no figure will seem to you a less dramatic figure than he. Nay! having regard to his past, you will deem him of all figures the most undramatically ridiculous.

Not incomparable with Prometheus Bound is Napoleon at St. Helena. Of course, the destructive egoist in captivity does not cut so noble a figure as the beneficent altruist; but Napoleon, not less than Prometheus, is an eternally dramatic symbol of the aforesaid conflict. A handful of dull English dragoons and duller English civilians lording it and martinetting it, in an out-of-the-way islet, over him who from the fire in his own breast had set Europe blazing, and in whose own breast that fire was still smouldering and, in its suppression, choking and stifling him—what finer psychologic theme could

any dramatist find in the world's history? But suppose history to be here inaccurate. Suppose that, when he disembarked at St. Helena, Napoleon so "ranged himself" as to become a gentle, agreeable, sentimental, unambitious old gentleman, such as you might meet at any moment in the smoking-room of any club in London. Met there, the type is not ridiculous. The old gentleman in the arm-chair next to yours has not, in his day, set Europe blazing—has never even, you conjecture, cherished sinister designs on the Thames. So you "mock him not." But he is not dramatic. Nor would Napoleon, behaving at St. Helena as this old gentleman behaves here, have been dramatic. And ridiculous, most ridiculous, such a Napoleon would, assuredly, have been. And just such a Napoleon it is that Messrs. Lloyd Osbourne and Austin Strong have from their joint fancies evolved for Mr. Martin Harvey.

Conscious that a sudden, unprepared sight of Napoleon—even of Pelléas in Napoleonic costume—would suggest to us the wrong old notion which they have discarded, these authors wisely keep Napoleon off the stage till the curtain is falling on the first act. Meanwhile, we have been told what manner of man we are to expect. We hear, among many other things to his advantage, that what most preys on his mind is not the loss of his empire, but the enforced separation from his dear wife and child. The children of other people are, however,

a very great solace to him; and in the second act, on his birthday, he holds a review of them, all armed by him with toy muskets and taught to march just like real soldiers. Bless his heart—his gentle, uncomplaining, tenderly-humorous heart—but do not imagine there is no warm corner in it for deserving adults. Notice that young English lieutenant, a most deserving case. He is in love with yonder English maid, but too poor to buy his promotion and wed her. Napoleon, like the good fairy godfather that he is, will find, though he can ill afford, the money to buy him his promotion. There must be a peal of wedding-bells to gladden Napoleon's old heart. His thoughts are all for others. Others' are for him. Others plot that he may escape, but they do not take him into their confidence. They say that his health would not stand the excitement, but we suspect that what they really fear is that he would refuse to participate in anything underhand. When all their plans are laid, and they try to rush him into the enterprise, he does, for a moment, waver, seeming as though he would allow himself to be rushed. He is only human. But in a moment his better nature asserts itself. "No," he says firmly, "I will not spill the blood of France *in a purely personal cause.*" The young lieutenant has a little surprise for him—a portrait of the little Duc de Reichstadt. "Leave me alone with my son," falters Napoleon. They leave him alone with his son. And there we, too, are asked by

Messrs. Lloyd Osbourne and Austin Strong to leave him.

To the people whose one desire in playgoing is "a good laugh" such a Napoleon will be a safe attraction. Those who are fond of drama, will be bored by it. Those who are fond both of drama and of history will be much annoyed by it. Indeed, I never saw a worse specimen of historical drama. Usually, as in the case of "Dante," the mischief is that the playwright takes from history some undramatic material which he twists painfully into dramatic form, thus creating an uncomfortable friction between our knowledge of the real thing and our sense of the imaginary thing. That is bad enough. But how much worse is it when, as now, in "The Exile," finely dramatic material is taken from history and twisted painfully into quite undramatic form! Napoleon at St. Helena was inwardly the same Napoleon that had terrorised the world. There is the dramatist's chance, and he goes out of his way to miss it if he makes Napoleon a sympathetic old dodderer. Napoleon loved his son, doubtless; but only in a Napoleonic sense, only as the possible heir of his own greatness. Napoleon may (I believe there is evidence that he did) drill a squad of small children. But, if so, his motive was the wish to realise in his own dramatic way the full irony and bitterness of downfall; it was not a delight in pattering feet and chubby cheeks and piping voices. Napoleon did not escape

from St. Helena. But the reason was not, you may be sure, that he, who, in the old days, would ever have so gladly sacrificed to his purpose those "six cent mille soldats qui marchent avec moi, pour moi, et comme moi," had become squeamish at the sight of blood "spilled in a purely personal cause." I cannot see why the authors of "The Exile" have gone so far and wilfully out of their way. I can but conjecture that their play was the result of a wager made by them that they would induce Mr. Martin Harvey, of all actors the least likely, to appear as Napoleon. Mr. Harvey is all for dreamy and ethereal and contemplative romanticism, and would flinch from the notion of playing Napoleon as he was. So they sat down to project Napoleon as he pre-eminently wasn't. They have won their (hypothetical) wager. And Mr. Harvey plays their (hypothetical) Napoleon in exactly the right key.

AT THE COURT THEATRE

June 20, 1903.

You are allowed to shed a tear or two when you see the owls building their nests in some palace that was erst a setting of gaiety and pride and riches. During this week the Elizabethan Stage Society is performing " Twelfth Night " at the Court Theatre. In days gone by, this pretty theatre had a very great vogue. Popular little comedies were enacted in it by constellative little companies, and throughout the stalls and boxes diamonds of the first water flashed on bosoms heaving with mirth. Sloane Square is no further now than then it was from the centre of things. If anything, it is a trifle nearer. Yet, somewhy, the popular little comedies and the constellative little companies are things of the past there, and the diamonds of the first water are a-flash elsewhere. The Court is still a pretty little theatre, but forlorn. Indeed, were it less spruce, had it something of a ruin's aspect, its estate would seem less piteous. When the roof of a palace has fallen in, and the walls are clad in moss and lichen, one does not grudge the owl his building operations. But it is bitter to see him where all is yet fit for human habitation. I do not dissemble a pang at seeing the Elizabethan

Stage Society in possession of the Court. Deeply though I respect that Society for the enthusiastic scholarship which is the cause of it, its operations are somewhat too owlish to be pleasant here. I use the word "owlish" as implying a certain rather morbid and inhuman solemnity and a detachment from the light of day. The aim of the Society is to show us the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries as they were enacted in their own period. To see them thus is instructive, but it is not, except for a few exceptional persons, delightful. Shakespeare wrote at a time when the science of scenic production was in its infancy, and he himself, as he has told us, was conscious and resentful of the limitations. We have developed that science, and it is only when Shakespeare's plays are produced with due regard to this development that they seem to us works of living art. Doubtless, the Elizabethan audience was not, like the quicker-witted poet, conscious of the defects in the Elizabethan productions. But we, in the twentieth century, cannot project—or rather retroject—ourselves into their state of receptivity. We cannot forget what we have learned. Living in the light, we cannot accustom our eyes to the darkness of the dark ages. The epithet "owlish" is inevitable of a Society which finds in the darkness of the dark ages its natural element. To go back into those ages for instruction is one thing; to do so for pleasure is another; and there is no doubt that members of

the Elizabethan Stage Society really do enjoy themselves. Long may they blink and flutter and hoot. Only let them not be held up to us as examples, as illustrators of how the thing should be done. They love darkness, and have a perfect right to disport themselves in it. But don't let us be awed into admitting that they, not we, are the children of light.

It seems absurd that we should have to make a stand in the matter. Yet it is a fact that the mode of the Elizabethan Stage Society is by some authoritative persons pretended to be the one and only dignified mode of presenting Shakespeare's plays—to be a mode in comparison with which ours is tawdry and Philistine and wicked. This pretence is not, I think, made by Mr. William Poel or by his coadjutors. They are modest and sensible men, claiming no more than that they pander to our passion for archæology. Enough for them, to be our instructors: for amusement, for æsthetic satisfaction, we may go elsewhere, without hurting their sensibilities. Yet are they used by the authorities aforesaid, as a stick to beat us with. Some people are born with a sense for poetry, but with no dramatic sense. Such people detest the theatre. That is in them a quite reasonable sentiment. For the theatre aims at presenting poetic drama as something more than mere poetry; and that something more, if you don't care for it, mars the pleasure that the mere poetry gives you. Some

people, again, care for drama, and are dead to poetry. Accordingly, they detest "the study." They don't sit down there to read Shakespeare's plays. That, again, is quite reasonable in them. But they would be behaving unreasonably if they said to the students "Come! Get out of this. You are not legitimately enjoying yourselves." And that speech is the converse of what some of the more arrogant students are saying to the play-goers. These students, seeing a poetic play performed by the Elizabethan Stage Society, are blissfully conscious that the dramatic element is eliminated. True, there are footlights, instead of a reading-lamp; and there are dressed-up ladies and gentlemen instead of a printed page. But at any rate "there is no damned nonsense about" drama. Poetry reigns supreme, alone, unquestioned. The student can almost imagine that his feet are on his own fender. And so "This," says he, "is the way in which Shakespeare should be acted." Thus "an eminent Man of Letters writes" to the Elizabethan Stage Society that its performance of "Twelfth Night" is "one of the most inspiring and most poetical at which I have ever been present." In other words, he had not been made conscious of the dramatic significance of the verse which he loved. He had heard a series of recitations—the next best thing to reading them to himself. "You have trained your actors," he says, "to treat the play with the maximum of

respect." Not much interlineal ingenuity is needed to grasp the meaning of that little pæan. Men of letters, for the most part, cannot abide mimes who know their business. For such mimes give (though under the system of the Elizabethan Stage Society not even they can give) dramatic significance to the verse spoken by them, making it illustrate the feelings of the characters by them impersonated, making it point the situations into which those characters are thrown. From my own standpoint, from the standpoint of any one in whom some dramatic sense is combined with some sense for poetry, the ideal interpreter of a Shakespearean part is one who effects an exactly fair compromise between the poetry and the drama, giving to the words as much of the beauty of their rhythm as is compatible with their reflection of mood and character. These ideal interpreters are, as is the way of ideal things, rare. But, when found, they would not satisfy the kind of man who is most easily described as "of Letters." What he wants is mere reciters—mimes who know only the one side of their business, or who have been "trained" not to show through the mists of an undramatic Society that they do know the other. Hence this eminent one's joy in the present stars of the Elizabethan Stage Society. Perhaps, because he is so accustomed to solitary reading, he is not a good judge even of the art of recitation. Or it may be that the company had put forward for him a best foot that was not

protruded last Tuesday evening. Though Malvolio appeared as a brisk, pleasant, meaningless squire, and Olivia as a subdued tragedy-queen, and though none of the other characters, except Sir Toby Belch, was graced with characteristic qualities, my eager ears did not catch any triumphs in declamation. Indeed, I had seldom heard—or rather, tried to hear—such poor efforts in elocution. But I suppose it is more important, to the art of an eminent Man of Letters, that mimes be undramatic than that they be audible and euphonious.

"COUSIN KATE"

July 4, 1903.

In "Cousin Kate," the latest play by the latest playwright, the character which for me stands out most distinctly, and gives me the most amusement, is the character of the Rev. James Bartlett, a curate. I have seen many curates on the stage. Indeed, without a comic curate a comedy is held to be hardly complete. Curates, from time immemorial, have been one of the national butts. It has always been felt that there is something absurd about them. And I fear that the instinct is a sound one. Only, the absurdity of the average curate is not of the kind that is commonly attributed to him. He is not a fool, a prig, a molly-coddle, or any of those other things as which he is presented to us. He is quite an ordinary young man. But he occupies an extraordinary position. And it is in the contrast between what nature made him and what circumstances have made him, in the contrast between what he is and what he tries to be, that we find the true reason for the smiles which he provokes in us. Of course, there are other ordinary young men in extraordinary positions. There is the young doctor, there is the young solicitor. Each of these has to assume a measure of oracular wisdom, telling us

sharply, gravely, what we must do and what we must not do, and knowing well that his advice may turn out to be quite wrong. The matters on which we consult a doctor or a solicitor are generally matters of which we, with our especial knowledge of ourselves, are quite competent judges; nor is the average doctor or solicitor endowed with such a gift of penetration as will raise him to our level; nor has he more common sense than we have. Yet we insist on sitting at his feet, and gaping for such words of unwisdom as he, lordly, shall vouchsafe us. We refuse to see that he is ridiculous. In the average curate we refuse to see anything else. There is a reason for this unjust difference. The doctor or solicitor practises his craft during certain hours of the day, in appropriate places, for fixed fees. For the rest of the day he is an ordinary, unspecialised human being. He does not have to cheapen himself and bring himself into ridicule by striking always a doctorial or solicitorial attitude for every emergency, or for no emergency at all. The curate is less lucky. Wherever he is, at whatever hour, he must exemplify those qualities which in church he prays may be implanted in us all. Of no finer clay than we are, he must appear to be always gentle, cheerful, high-minded, simple-hearted, fulfilled with universal sympathy and love. He must behave, in fact, as a saint. Now, saints are rare, and not all of them are put into holy orders. Consequently, the number of really impressive

curates is quite infinitesimal, and the number of really ridiculous curates is quite enormous. Elderly clergymen are often impressive. This is partly because their natures have by years of effort—call it pretence, if you will—been actually elevated some way towards saintliness, so that between what they really are and what they ideally ought to be there is no staggering distance; and partly because they have, at least, gained ease of manner, and can comport themselves with apparent naturalness. The young curate is necessarily ill at ease. He does not feel saintly, and he does not know how to seem so. There are times, doubtless, when he is in a really gentle and cheerful frame of mind. But there are others when he is in a bad temper and depressed. His mind is not always high, nor his heart always simple; and as for universal sympathy and love, he has his likes and dislikes, even as the rest of us. In course of years he may develop a personal manner to conceal these failings. But at present he has to adopt a conventional manner—to squeeze his voice and vocabulary and the expression of his face into a conventional mould of saintliness. He has to cut himself hastily on a pattern. And the result must needs be ludicrous. He does not seem like a human being. If we happen to have known him before he was ordained, and know him to be quite a good fellow really, the ludicrous shock is doubled for us. I remember reading in some novel (though I do not remember in what novel)

an amusing treatment of this situation. The hero meets in London an old college friend who has just been ordained. He invites him to dinner, eager to renew the friendship. But, try as he will, the friendship presently dissolves in his own irrepressible laughter. "If," he reflects, "I had never met him before, I could at least have kept my countenance." That is the tragedy, or the comedy, of the average curate in real life: the contrast between the saint that he isn't and the good fellow that he is. On the stage, hitherto, this contrast has been missed. There the curate has always figured as a merely absurd person, whose mannerisms are just what one expects of him. But in "Cousin Kate" Mr. Hubert Henry Davies lets us see a curate who is quite human despite his mannerisms. The Rev. James Bartlett, as he calls him, is a man of like passions with ourselves, to be hailed and taken seriously by us. And for that very reason he is irresistibly comic. The girl with whom he is silently in love is about to be married to another man. Almost on the eve of the wedding, the bridegroom disappears, and there is a general impression that he means to jilt the bride. The curate pays a call on the distressed household. As a man, he is, of course, overjoyed. But as a curate he has to offer that consolation of which he is universal provider. "May I," he says to the girl's mother, "sympathise with you very deeply in this visitation?" He sighs gently. "It is all lamentable—lamentable," he

exclaims. "May I," he asks again, "hope that, though your path now seems dark, all may ultimately prove to be for the best?" The girl herself is presently handed over to him for ministration. "Be patient," he tells her, "and be assured that all shall be made plain." Later, when he has declared his own private feelings, the bridegroom reappears. "As," says he to the mother, "your daughter is about to take what is perhaps the most important step in her life, would it not be well to pause whilst there is yet time?" In all these passages we have exactly the diction of the average curate. The fatuousness is not exaggerated. Having to express broadcast, in and out of season, sentiments which he does not feel, the average curate must, as I suggested, reel off an artificial lingo. But Mr. Davies' cleverness is not so much in that he has caught this lingo and given it without the usual exaggeration of the comic playwright as in that he provides for the first time the foil by which the full absurdity of that lingo and of its utterer is made manifest. I think that the vicar of every parish in the land should send his curate or curates to the Haymarket before this play is withdrawn. . . . On second thoughts, I withdraw that suggestion. Our curates are conscious of their own defects, already; and, as these defects are an inevitable part of an inevitable system, to quicken that consciousness were an act of sheer brutality.

A PASTORAL PLAY

July 11, 1903

The most commonplace things must ever be the most significant. (This saying is itself a commonplace, and significant accordingly.) Our trite form of greeting springs from the very root of things. That we say invariably "How are you?" is, analysed, an admission that the most important element in human happiness is physical health. In every country the greeting is equivalent to ours, except in America. There the struggle for wealth is so fierce, the pace to it so swift, that they take it as a matter of course that no one is well. Every one there—every man, at least—is suffering from overstrained nerves. And I believe that when two male acquaintances hurry past each other on the street their greeting is a perfunctory "What have you?" But in our hemisphere health is still the topic of prime importance, and nowhere is it so constantly debated as in that fleck on our hemisphere which is called England. For health depends very much on climate, and nowhere else is the climate so capricious. We never know what the weather will be, and how we shall be, to-morrow. Our interest in the weather is based on our will to live. I do not see why among us any one should

be sneered at for opening a conversation with a reference to the weather. The wonder is that this fascinating and absorbing topic is ever—as sometimes it is—subsequently dropped by two English interlocutors. Of course, if meteorology were to become an exact science, we should know where we were, and the weather, as a topic, would not so tyrannously dominate us. But, as meteorology seems to be not yet a science at all, but simply a name given to certain kinds of practical jokes lightly played on us at our own expense, we must needs continue to dabble in weather-wisdom on our own account. Perhaps, in time, Science will atone for some of the many burdens it has piled upon the frail shoulders of humanity by discovering some means of not merely detecting, but also directing, the intentions of the elements. Utopian, I look forward to a time when there shall be erected, at Greenwich or some other convenient place, an elaborate contrivance whereby the clouds shall be "compelled," as erst by Zeus, and the winds be held in thrall, as erst by Æolus, and Phœbus himself be forced to smile pleasantly on us throughout all his daily tour. Rain shall fall in the country, as much of it as the farmers need; but in the cities never, save for a light shower, between three and four A.M., to lay the dust for the traffic of the coming day. Breezes shall come from the west to flatter us, and from the south to caress us. None shall be admitted from the other two points of the com-

pass. We shall have entered on a Golden Age, wherein, among many other things, Pastoral Plays shall have become really delightful.

"Really possible" I was about to say. But had not Mr. Philip Carr, conning the bright lexicon of youth, found that they were not impossible even here and now? And had not he stepped lightly forth, an Ajax defying the rain, the snow, the wind, to say nothing of the lightning, to which we are, at all seasons, coweringly liable? "Quel geste!" I am glad to say that last week, when the Society which has been founded on his gesture produced "Comus" and "The Hue and Cry after Cupid," the elements, staggered by the sheer audacity of the thing, could not gather themselves together in time to punish it. And I am equally sorry to say that I was not able to witness their discomfiture. This week I attended a performance of "The Faithful Shepherdess", and alas! the elements were thoroughly themselves again. True, the rain, perhaps with a sneaking kindness for young insolence, held itself aloof from the concert of powers. But I felt that at any moment it might fall into line. Anyhow, as I entered the Botanical Gardens, I was shivering slightly.

Slightly shivering, but determined to spend a happy evening. I had often read and rejoiced in reading this delicate Pastoral. It had always conjured round me in my study an Italianised England. No Englishman, of course, could have

made the play from his own unaided fancy. It needed first Guarini to set those sanguine shepherds and shepherdesses roving over the sunburnt grass. Such folk are not imaginable by a quite original English poet. Yet can they be stolen for us, and seen by us in the light of our own firesides. There, but hardly elsewhere. Remember that though Fletcher's poem was very much admired by contemporary critics, it was a failure on the stage, even though it was acted indoors, and even though there is good reason to believe that this island was warmer in the sixteenth century than now. However, I had always cherished the hope that my imaginings of the Wood before Clorin's Bower, and of the Wood with the Holy Well, might some day be actually realised for me. And, despite that slight shiver as I entered the Gardens, I was very receptive. The spirit was more than willing in me. I sighed, I slackened my pace, as though the evening were intensely hot. I *would* be attuned. I looked neither to the right nor to the left of the path, ignoring "This Way to the Gipsy Fortune-Teller" and "This Way to the Lucky Tub" and other similar lures whereby the cunning authorities tempt the ordinary visitor to believe that the open air isn't so bad after all. I would think only of Clorin, and Amarillis, and Amoret, and those others. "Where," I asked of a man with a peaked and gold-braided cap, "is Clorin's Bower?" He was unlettered: I had to be more prosaic. But the

taint of prose disappeared when I came within sight of what I sought. Entranced, I sat down and gazed at it. Others were seated beside me, but I was unconscious of them. My eye travelled over the undulating sward to that little forest of old trees. Trees were there of many kinds—cypresses, alders, willows, beeches, poplars. I do not, in point of fact, know one tree from another by name. But for the sake of style and colour, whether in thinking or in writing of them, I always hazard a guess at their names. Poplars, beeches, willows, alders, elms (I wanted a monosyllable, but could not think of one just then), cypresses—there they all were in their wistful and immemorial beauty, and over them all was the dim bloom of a summer twilight, and all of them, without exception, were shuddering in the wind. I shuddered in sympathy. I went, involuntarily, further than they : I sneezed. What if Clorin had heard me ? Even now perhaps she was gazing reproachfully at me through the leaves. I dared not meet her steadfast eyes. I looked away from her bower. Yonder was a little lake, fringed with bulrushes. Them I can swear to. On the surface of this little lake were swimming two swans. One of them suddenly dived his head under the water. I looked quickly away—too late : I sneezed not once but twice. I had already noticed in the water the reflection of the moon, and I thought that perhaps the moon might help to keep me in the right key till the shepherds and

shepherdesses should appear. I looked steadfastly up at the moon. It was at the full. I repeated to myself that it was at the full. It reminded me of a harvest-moon. Encouraged, I began to rehearse the epithets customarily applied to it. Honey-coloured . . . melancholy, inconstant, chaste . . . cold—I sneezed not twice but thrice. And at that moment, as by a miracle, three moons suddenly shone out from a bush—an oleander-bush—on the right-hand of the overt auditorium. Simultaneously, from the other side, came the music of flutes and viols. The performance was going to begin. Yes, there was Clorin herself, coming from the shadow of the leaves, to mourn that matchless shepherd who was dead untimely. "Hail, holy earth," she cried, "whose cold arms do embrace"—and the second line was lost to me through my own iambic sneezes. "Thus I free myself from all ensuing heats and fires," and again I succumbed, envying her power of imagination. There she stood, in the cold radiance of the quadruple moonlight, on the damp grass, in the almost whistling wind, vowing eternal maidenhood to the memory of a swain who, if he was worthy the sacrifice, must have been mutely imploring her from heaven not to stay out there catching her death of cold. The three additional moons, by the way, were merely the limelight. On the evening of my visit, the one ordinary moon would have been enough illumination; but Mr. Philip Carr was, of course, right not

to have relied on it. Only, though limelight had to be there, it ought not to have been quite so obvious. It marred the naturalness of the scenery, and was the one blot on an otherwise impeccable essay in the art of producing a pastoral play. Had there been a little less artificial light, and a great deal of artificial warmth, everything would have been quite perfect. Even as it was, I enjoyed the performance immensely. I write "immensely" without exaggeration. But, if I were to attempt a conscientiously phonetic spelling, "ibbedsely" would be, I regret to say, the correct version. "Et ego in Arcadia," but without a greatcoat.

MR. SHAW'S NEW DIALOGUES

September 12, 1903.

Aristotle, often as he sneered at Plato, never called Plato a dramatist, and did not drag the Platonic dialogues into his dramatic criticism. Nor did Plato himself profess to be a dramatist; and it would need a wide stretch of fancy to think of him dedicating one of his works to Aristotle as notable expert in dramatic criticism. On the other hand, here is Mr. Bernard Shaw dedicating his new book to "my dear Walkley", that pious custodian of the Aristotelian flame, and arguing, with Platonic subtlety, that this new book contains a play. Odd! For to drama Mr. Shaw and Plato stand in almost exactly the same relation. Plato, through anxiety that his work should be read, and his message accepted, so far mortified his strongly Puritan instincts as to give a setting of bright human colour to his abstract thought. He invented men of flesh and blood, to talk for him, and put them against realistic backgrounds. And thus he gained, and still retains, "a public". Only, his method was fraught with nemesis, and he is generally regarded as a poet—he, who couldn't abide poets. Essentially, he was no more a poet than he was a dramatist, or than Mr. Shaw is a dramatist. Like him, and unlike

Aristotle, for whom the exercise of thought was an end in itself, and who, therefore, did not attempt to bedeck as a decoy the form of his expression, Mr. Shaw is an ardent humanitarian. He wants to save us. So he gilds the pill richly. He does not, indeed, invent men of flesh and blood, to talk for him. There, where Plato succeeded, he fails, I must confess. But he assumes various disguises, and he ventriloquises, and moves against realistic backgrounds. In one direction he goes further than Plato. He weaves more of a story round the interlocutors. Suppose that in the "Republic", for example, there were "Socrates (in love with Aspasia)", "Glaucon (in love with Xanthippe)", etcetera, and then you have in your mind a very fair equivalent for what Mr. Shaw writes and calls a play. This peculiar article is, of course, not a play at all. It is "as good as a play"—infinitely better, to my peculiar taste, than any play I have ever read or seen enacted. But a play it is not. What is a dramatist? Principally, a man who delights in watching, and can portray, the world as it is, and the various conflicts of men and women as they are. Such a man has, besides the joy of sheer contemplation, joy in the technique of his art—how to express everything most precisely and perfectly, most worthily of the splendid theme. He may have a message to deliver. Or he may have none. *C'est selon.* But the message is never a tyrannous preoccupation. When the creative and

the critical faculty exist in one man, the lesser is perforce overshadowed by the greater. Mr. Shaw knows well—how could so keen a critic fail to detect ?—that he is a critic, and not a creator at all. But, for the purpose which I have explained, he must needs pretend through Mr. Walkley, who won't believe, to an innocent public which may believe, that his pen runs away with him. "Woman projecting herself dramatically by my hands (a process over which I have no control)." A touching fib ! The only things that Mr. Shaw cannot consciously control in himself are his sense of humour and his sense of reason. "The man who listens to Reason is lost : Reason enslaves all whose minds are not strong enough to master her." That is one of many fine and profound aphorisms printed at the end of the book, and written (one suspects) joyously, as a private antidote to the dramatic tomfoolery to which Mr. Shaw had perforce condescended. Well ! Mr. Shaw will never be manumitted by Reason. She is as inexorable an owner of him as is Humour, and a less kind owner, in that she does prevent him from seeing the world as it is, while Humour, not preventing him from being quite serious, merely prevents stupid people seeing how serious he is. Mr. Shaw is always trying to prove this or that thesis, and the result is that his characters (so soon as he differentiates them, ever so little, from himself) are the merest diagrams. Having no sense for life, he has, necessarily, no sense for art.

It would be strange, indeed, if he could succeed in that on which he is always pouring a very sincere contempt. "For art's sake alone," he declares, "I would not face the toil of writing a single sentence." That is no fib. Take away his moral purpose and his lust for dialectic, and Mr. Shaw would put neither pen to paper nor mouth to meeting, and we should be by so much the duller. But had you taken away from Bunyan or Ibsen or any other of those great artists whom Mr. Shaw, because they had "something to say", is always throwing so violently at our heads, they would have yet created, from sheer joy in life as it was and in art as it could become through their handling of it. Mr. Shaw, using art merely as a means of making people listen to him, naturally lays hands on the kind that appeals most quickly to the greatest number of people. There is something splendid in the contempt with which he uses as the vehicle for his thesis a conventional love-chase, with motors and comic brigands thrown in. He is as eager to be a popular dramatist and as willing to demean himself in any way that may help him to the goal, as was (say) the late Mr. Pettitt. I hope he will reach the goal. It is only the theatrical managers who stand between him and the off-chance of a real popular success. But if these managers cannot be shaken from their obstinate timidity, I hope that Mr. Shaw, realising that the general public is as loth to read plays as to read

books of undiluted philosophy, will cease to dabble in an art which he abhors. Let him always, by all means, use the form of dialogue—that form through which, more conveniently than through any other, every side of a subject can be laid bare to our intelligence. It is, moreover, a form of which Mr. Shaw is a master. In swiftness, tenseness and lucidity of dialogue no living writer can touch the hem of Mr. Shaw's garment. In "Man and Superman" every phrase rings and flashes. Here, though Mr. Shaw will be angry with me, is perfect art. In Mr. Shaw as an essayist I cannot take so whole-hearted a delight. Both in construction and in style his essays seem to me more akin to the art of oral debating than of literary exposition. That is because he trained himself to speak before he trained himself to write. And it is, doubtless, by reason of that same priority that he excels in writing words to be spoken by the human voice or to be read as though they were so spoken.

The name of this play's hero is John Tanner, corrupted from Don Juan Tenorio, of whom its bearer is supposed to be the lineal descendant and modern equivalent. But here we have merely one of the devices whereby Mr. Shaw seeks to catch the ear that he desires to box. Did not the end justify the means, Mr. Shaw's natural honesty would have compelled him to christen his hero Joseph or Anthony. For he utterly flouts the possibility of a Don Juan. Gazing out on the world, he beholds

a tremendous battle of sex raging. But it is the Sabine ladies who, more muscular than even Rubens made them, are snatching and shouldering away from out the newly-arisen walls the shrieking gentlemen of Rome. It is the fauns who scud coyly, on tremulous hoofs, through the woodland, not daring a backward-glance at rude and dogged nymphs who are gaining on them every moment. Of course, this sight is an hallucination. There are, it is true, women who take the initiative, and men who shrink from following them. There are, and always have been. Such beings are no new discovery, though their existence is stupidly ignored by the average modern dramatist. But they are notable exceptions to the rule of Nature. True, again, that in civilised society marriage is more important and desirable to a woman than to a man. "All women," said one of Disraeli's characters, "ought to be married, and no men." The epigram sums up John Tanner's attitude towards life even more wittily than anything that has been put into his mouth by Mr. Shaw. John Tanner, pursued and finally bound in matrimony by Miss Ann Whitefield, supplies an excellent motive for a comedy of manners. But to that kind of comedy Mr. Shaw will not stoop—not wittingly, at least. From John Tanner he deduces a general law. For him, John Tanner is Man, and Ann Whitefield is Woman—nothing less. He has fallen into the error—a strange error for a man with his views—of confusing

the natural sex-instinct with the desire for marriage. Because women desire marriage more strongly than men, therefore, in his opinion, the sex-instinct is communicated from woman to man. I need not labour the point that this conclusion is opposite to the obvious truth of all ages and all countries. Man is the dominant animal. It was unjust of Nature not to make the two sexes equal. Mr. Shaw hates injustice, and so, partly to redress the balance by robbing Man of conscious superiority, and partly to lull himself into peace of mind, he projects as real that visionary world of flitting fauns and brutal Sabines. Idealist, he insists that things are as they would be if he had his way. His characters come from out his own yearning heart. Only, we can find no corner for them in ours. We can no more be charmed by them than we can believe in them. Ann Whitefield is a minx. John Tanner is a prig. Prig versus Minx, with the gloves off, and Prig floored in every round—there you have Mr. Shaw's customary formula for drama ; and he works it out duly in " Man and Superman ". The main difference between this play and the others is that the minx and the prig are conscious not merely of their intellects, but of " the Life Force ". Of this they regard themselves, with comparative modesty, as the automatic instruments. They are wrong. The Life Force could find no use for them. They are not human enough, not alive enough. That is the main drawback for a dramatist who does

not love raw life: he cannot create living human characters.

And yet it is on such characters as John and Ann that Mr. Shaw founds his hopes for the future of humanity. If we are very good, we *may* be given the Superman. If we are very scientific, and keep a sharp look out on our instincts, and use them just as our intellects shall prescribe, we *may* produce a race worthy to walk this fair earth. That is the hope with which we are to buoy ourselves up. It is a forlorn one. Man may, in the course of æons, evolve into something better than now he is. But the process will be not less unconscious than long. Reason and instinct have an inveterate habit of cancelling each other. If the world were governed by reason, it would not long be inhabited. Life is a muddle. It seems a brilliant muddle, if you are an optimist; a dull one, if you aren't; but in neither case can you deny that it is the muddlers who keep it going. The thinkers cannot help it at all. They are detached from "the Life Force". If they could turn their fellow-creatures into thinkers like themselves, all would be up. Fortunately, or unfortunately, they have not that power. The course of history has often been turned by sentiment, but by thought never. The thinkers are but valuable ornaments. A safe place is assigned to them on the world's mantelpiece, while humanity basks and blinks stupidly on the hearth, warming itself in the glow of the Life Force.

On that mantelpiece Mr. Shaw deserves a place of honour. He is a very brilliant ornament. And never have his ornamental qualities shone more brightly than in this latest book. Never has he thought more clearly or more wrongly, and never has he displayed better his genius for dialectic, and never has his humour gushed forth in such sudden natural torrents. This is his masterpiece, so far. Treasure it as the most complete expression of the most distinct personality in current literature. Treasure it, too, as a work of specific art, in line with your Plato and Lucian and Landor.

AN ÆSTHETIC BOOK

September 19, 1903.

I REVERE the expert in an art: but I prefer the occasional critic. The mischief of being an expert is this: long before you have fairly earned the title, you have exhausted what you had to say; and, moreover, your knowledge of life and of the other arts has been rusting. Mr. Arthur Symons, whose new book * is my theme, must certainly be deemed an occasional critic of drama. He has gone, in his time, to many theatres, and written about what he saw in them; but he has not lingered in them exclusively; still less has he regarded them as his goal. By him they had merely been marked down among the many sights to be "done" by him as generally curious tourist. The notes he made of them are inevitably refreshing. True, we do not (for a reason which I will adumbrate anon) feel that here is a man who is in close touch with life. In that respect the book might be the work of a theatrical expert. Where it differs from such work is in the sense it gives us of a writer who has nourished his æsthetic sense by the study of diverse art-forms, and so can judge this particular art-

* "Plays, Acting and Music." By Arthur Symons. Duckworth.

form by a more general standard and with a larger vision. The expert is always tempted to pettifog. The occasional critic would hardly know how, even had he the desire, to pettifog. Yet in one branch of theatrical criticism, Mr. Symons is more knowing, more meticulous, than almost any of the regular critics. Theatrical criticism concerns itself with two arts, dramaturgy and acting. The ordinary critic devotes all his intelligence to the first, partly because it is the more important, and partly because, being itself a form of literature, it can more easily be written about. Many of our dramatists can get useful hints from many of our critics. But our mimes can derive no benefit save such pride as there is for them in knowing that they are "admirable", or have "never done anything better", or have "seldom been seen to greater advantage", and such shame as there may be in the consciousness that they are "somewhat disappointing" or "evidently suffering from the proverbial nervousness incidental to a first-night performance". On the other hand, I can imagine that the eminent mimes who in this book are so very sensitively and acutely appreciated might hail Mr. Symons as a wizard, in that he knows better than they how they make their every effect, and which of their effects is right, which wrong, and the why and the wherefore of all their fluid and elusive art. I can imagine that any young mime, reading attentively what Mr. Symons has to say of Coquelin and Bernhardt and

Hading and many others, would derive real profit for his or her own work. I do not agree with all Mr. Symons' estimates. But the point is that they are estimates—keen and patient observations, made from a sound basis of first principles, and not merely the usual peppering of fortuitous epithets.

One reason why this book is so fresh and welcome is that we see for the first time the Pateresque manner and method of criticism applied to current dramatic art. "Pateresque" is no slight on Mr. Symons. I use it merely because "Symonsesque" would not, at present, be so quickly indicative. Mr. Symons is no mere servile imitator, though Pater had the good fortune to be born before him, and the bad fortune to die too soon to see how well his work would be carried forward. To say that the mantle of A has descended on B is usually but a polite way of saying that B, in his master's clothes, looks as like his master as a valet looks like *his* master. But there is no hidden sting to my image of Mr. Symons in Pater's mantle. Superficially, no doubt, Mr. Symons has indulged in some conscious imitation. His frequent "Well!" for the resumption of an argument is a conscious echo. But for Pater, again, he would not be so shy of showing us his sense of humour—would not swathe his jests in such solemn wrappers before venturing to slip them into his scheme. Nor would he so multiply his commas. But his conscious imitation does not go far. Essentially, he is himself, and that self

merely happens to have been Pater's—a sensitive, fastidious, ever-ruminating self. The quietism of his style is, not less than Pater's, a genuine growth from within. The most salient point of likeness between the two men, that which is at once their cardinal strength and their cardinal weakness, is that for each of them (as, indeed, for every quietist) art matters more than life, and form in art more than meaning. Life was too harsh, chaotic an affair for the timid and exacting soul of Pater. He could not relish or digest it till art had minced it for him. He seldom mentioned it directly. When he cast his criticism in the form of fiction, it was always some antique or very cloistral phase of life that he handled, some secretive and remote soul that he dared finger. Once, indeed, he did venture out into the open. But "Emerald Uthwart" is itself the greatest monument to his horror and ignorance of the hurly-burly. His aim therein, his explicit aim, was to describe an averagely stolid English boy going to a public school, and subsequently going into the army and dying heroically for his country. "See him as he stands! counting now the hours that remain, on the eve of that first emigration"—that is, on the evening before he goes to school for the first time. "That first emigration" is a whiff of smelling-salts, to save the author from swooning on the threshold of awful actuality. "As Uthwart passes through the old ecclesiastical city, upon which any modern touch, modern door or window,

seems a thing out of place through negligence, the diluted sunlight itself seems driven along with a sparing trace of gilded vane or red tile in it, under the wholesome active wind from the East coast. . . . Uthwart duly passes his examination; and, in their own chapel in the transept of the choir, lighted up late for evening prayer after the long day of trial, is received to the full privileges of a scholar with the accustomed Latin words:—*Introitum tuum et exitum tuum custodiat Dominus!*" Uthwart's whole school-life is treated in this vein, as though it were a kind of passionate monasticism. The grim realities of warfare, when we find him later in the thick of them, are described as one would describe a stately minuet, danced by shadows. The story ends with an extract from the diary of a surgeon. But, though this device savours of Miss Braddon, the surgeon himself, describing the post-mortem, is endowed with all the lingering and exquisite melancholy of Pater's especial style. Only so, at that ceremonious distance, through those veils, could Pater look life in the face. Not vivid, therefore, not very bracing and filling, is the impression he transmits. When Mr. Symons deals directly with life, we suffer from a similar inanition. Life has no formal curves and harmonies. It is not an art. Mr. Symons thinks that it is, if you can but see it rightly, and that he is therefore in duty bound not to omit it from his syllabus. "As life too is a form of art," he says in his preface, "and the visible world the chief store-

house of beauty, I try to indulge my curiosity by the study of places and of people." But the result of this very discreet and tentative attitude is that Mr. Symons hardly conveys through his writing that his subject is alive and kicking. When he writes, as he often has written, of the cities that he has visited, and tells us, with very delicate art, of the many impressions they made on him, I always feel that they are, somehow, cities of the dead. I do not feel that pervasive animation which is the keynote of a city's life. "Dear God! the very houses seem asleep", and Mr. Symons, a still and solitary figure, muffled, seems to be crooning over them a delicious lullaby. In this book he naïvely convicts himself of incapacity to write about actual things. He confesses, like a certain statesman, but probably with greater truth than he, that he never reads a newspaper. The man who does not skim through at least one newspaper every day is not a man who is interested in life, and not, therefore, a man who can write well about it. Even when, as in this book, Mr. Symons is dealing with life only as filtered through art, his innate quietism is sometimes a stumbling-block. Thus he argues that Sir Henry Irving was an ideal Coriolanus because "he never ranted". The truth, of course, is that Sir Henry failed as Coriolanus because he was incapable of that harsh robustness which is the very essence of the part. However, I do not deplore such errors. They are the necessary defects of a quality. If Mr.

Symons were not such a quietist, he would not be, on the whole, so patient and penetrating an art-critic. He would not, moreover, be himself. A definite self—that is what one most needs in a critic. "It takes all kinds to make a world." And the habit of demanding all kinds in one man is a stupid habit, due, no doubt, to that modern spirit of hurry-skurry which makes us so impatient of all learning that cannot be absorbed quickly and easily from one compendious source. Every quality has its defect, and it is only by eclectic reading that we can behold that monster, the perfect critic.

AN HYPOCRISY IN PLAYGOING

October 10, 1903.

EECOSSTOETCHIAYOOMAHNIOEEVAHRACHELLOPESTIBAHNTAMAHNTAFAHNTA . . . shall I go on? No? You do not catch my meaning, when I write thus? I am to express myself, please, in plain English? If I wrote the whole of my article as I have written the beginning of it, you would, actually, refuse to read it? I am astonished. The chances are that you do not speak Italian, do not understand Italian when it is spoken. The chances are that Italian spoken from the stage of a theatre produces for you no more than the empty, though rather pretty, effect which it produces for me, and which I have tried to suggest phonetically in print. And yet the chances are also that you were in the large British audience which I saw, last Wednesday afternoon, in the Adelphi Theatre — that large, patient, respectful audience, which sat out the performance of "Hedda Gabler". Surely, you are a trifle inconsistent? You will not tolerate two columns or so of gibberish from me, and yet you will profess to have passed very enjoyably a whole afternoon in listening to similar gibberish from Signora Duse. Suppose that not only my article, but the whole

of this week's Review were written in the fashion which you reject, and suppose that the price of the Review were raised from sixpence to ninepence (proportionately to the increased price for seats at the Adelphi when Signora Duse comes there). To be really consistent, you would have to pay, without a murmur, that ninepence, and to read, from cover to cover, that Review, and to enjoy, immensely, that perusal. An impossible feat? Well, just so would it be an impossible feat not to be bored by the Italian version of "Hedda Gabler". Why not confess your boredom? Better still, why go to be bored?

All this sounds rather brutal. But it is a brutal thing to object to humbug, and only by brutal means can humbug be combated, and there seems to me no form of humbug sillier and more annoying than the habit of attending plays that are acted in a language whereof one cannot make head or tail. Of course, I do not resent the mere fact that Signora Duse comes to London. Let that distinguished lady be made most welcome. Only, let the welcome be offered by appropriate people. There are many of them. There is the personnel of the embassy in Grosvenor Square. There are the organ-grinders, too, and the ice-cream men. And there are some other, some English, residents in London who have honourably mastered the charming Italian tongue. Let all this blest minority flock to the Adelphi every time, and fill as much of it as they can. But, for

the most part, the people who, instead of staying comfortably at home, insist on flocking and filling are they to whom, as to me, Italian is gibberish, and who have not, as have I, even the excuse of a mistaken sense of duty. Perhaps they have some such excuse. Perhaps they really do feel that they are taking a means of edification. "We needs must praise the highest when we see it"; Duse is (we are assured) the highest; therefore we needs must see her, for our own edification, and go into rhapsodies. Such, perhaps, is the unsound syllogism which these good folk mutter. I suggest, of what spiritual use is it to see the highest if you cannot understand it? Go round to the booksellers and buy Italian grammars, Italian conversation-books, the "Inferno", and every other possible means to a nodding acquaintance with Italian. Stick to your task; and then, doubtless, when next Signora Duse comes among us, you will derive not merely that edification which is now your secret objective, but also that gratification which you are so loudly professing. I know your rejoinder to that. "Oh, Duse's personality is so wonderful. Her temperament is so marvellous. And then her art! It doesn't matter whether we know Italian or not. We only have to watch the movements of her hands" (rhapsodies omitted) "and the changes of her face" (r. o.) "and the inflections of her voice" (r. o.) "to understand everything, positively *everything*." Are you so sure? I take it that you understand

more from the performance of an Italian play which you have read in an English translation than from the performance of an Italian play which never has been translated. There are, so to say, degrees in your omniscience. You understand more if you have read the translation lately than if a long period has elapsed since your reading of it. Are you sure that you would not understand still more if the play were acted in English? Of course you are. Nay, and equally of course, you are miserably conscious of all the innumerable things that escape you, that flit faintly past you. You read your English version, feverishly, like a timid candidate for an examination, up to the very last moment before your trial. Perhaps you even smuggle it in with you, for furtive cribbing. But this is a viva voce examination: you have no time for cribbing: you must rely on Signora Duse's voice, hands, face and your own crammed memory. And up to what point has your memory been crammed? You remember the motive of the play, the characters, the sequence of the scenes. Them you recognise on the stage. But do you recognise the masquerading words? Not you. They all flash past you, whirl round you, mocking, not to be caught, not to be challenged and unmasked. You stand sheepishly in their midst, like a solitary stranger strayed into a masked ball. Or, to reverse the simile, you lurch this way and that, clutching futile air, like the central figure in blindman's

buff. Occasionally you do catch a word or two. These are only the proper names, but they are very welcome. It puts you in pathetic conceit with yourself, for the moment, when from the welter of unmeaning vowels and consonants "Ejlert Lövborg" or "Hedda Gabler" suddenly detaches itself, like a silver trout "rising" from a muddy stream. These are your only moments of comfort. For the rest, your irritation at not grasping the details prevents you from taking pleasure in your power to grasp the general effect.

I doubt even whether, in the circumstances, you can have that synthetic power fully and truly. It may be that what I am going to say about Signora Duse as Hedda Gabler is vitiated by incapacity to understand exactly her rendering of the part as a whole. She may be more plausibly like Hedda Gabler than she seems to me. Mark, I do not say that she may have conceived the part more intelligently, more rightly, with greater insight into Ibsen's meaning. And perhaps I should express myself more accurately if I said that Hedda Gabler may be more like Signora Duse than she seems to me. For this actress never stoops to impersonation. I have seen her in many parts, but I have never (you must take my evidence for what it is worth) detected any difference in her. To have seen her once is to have seen her always. She is artistically right or wrong according as whether the part

enacted by her can or cannot be merged and fused into her own personality. Can Hedda Gabler be so merged and fused? She is self-centred. Her eyes are turned inward to her own soul. She does not try to fit herself into the general scheme of things. She broods disdainfully aloof. So far so good; for Signora Duse, as we know her, is just such another. (This can be said without offence. The personality of an artist, as shown through his or her art, is not necessarily a reflection, and is often a flat contradiction—a complement—to his or her personality in life.) But Hedda is also a minx, and a ridiculous minx, and not a nice minx. Her revolt from the circumstances of her life is untinged with nobility. She imagines herself to be striving for finer things, but her taste is in fact not good enough for what she gets. One can see that Ibsen hates her, and means us to laugh at her. For that reason she "wears" much better than those sister-rebels whom Ibsen glorified. She remains as a lively satire on a phase that for serious purposes is out of date. She ought to be played with a sense of humour, with a comedic understanding between the player and the audience. Signora Duse is not the woman to create such an understanding. She cannot, moreover, convey a hint of minxishness: that quality is outside her rubric. Hedda is anything but listless. She is sick of a life which does not tickle her with little ready-made excitements. But she is ever alert to contrive these little

excitements for herself. She is the very soul of restless mischief. Signora Duse suggested the weary calm of one who has climbed to a summit high above the gross world. She was as one who sighs, but can afford to smile, being at rest with herself. She was spiritual, statuesque, somnambulistic, what you will, always in direct opposition to eager, snappy, fascinating, nasty little Hedda Gabler. Resignedly she shot the pistol from the window. Resignedly she bent over the book of photographs with the lover who had returned. Resignedly she lured him to drunkenness. Resignedly she committed his MS. to the flames. Resignation, as always, was the keynote of her performance. And here, as often elsewhere, it rang false.

However, it was not the only performance of Hedda Gabler. There was another, and, in some ways, a better. While Signora Duse walked through her part, the prompter threw himself into it with a will. A more raucous whisper I never heard than that which preceded the Signora's every sentence. It was like the continuous tearing of very thick silk. I think it worried every one in the theatre, except the Signora herself, who listened placidly to the prompter's every reading, and, as soon as he had finished, reproduced it in her own way. This process made the matinée a rather long one. By a very simple expedient the extra time might have been turned

to good account. How much pleasure would have been gained, and how much hypocrisy saved, if there had been an interpreter on the O.P. side, to shout in English what the prompter was whispering in Italian !

A MAGNIFICENT DIS-PLAY

October 17, 1903.

If only Mr. Pinero would be simple! They say that he took two years to write "Letty"—three thousand hours or so, maybe, of solid labour. And not one too many. The modern form of dramaturgy is the most difficult of all the art-forms. Ibsen himself, even in his prime, was strictly biennial. Let Mr. Pinero be quinquennial, if so disposed. It is right for a work of art to be elaborate, in the literal sense of that word. But the elaboration of "Letty" is especially in the other sense. And to this difference I attribute the failure of "Letty" to evoke from me something beyond admiration for the author's amazing skill. An artist should labour to whittle away all that is superfluous to his main theme or idea. Even as an athlete is "trained" for the annihilation of every ounce of flesh that would impede the strong free play of his muscles, so must the work of art be "trained" till nothing is left but what is sharply essential to its effect. In Strasburg there is another mode of "training". Certain of the geese there are enclosed in hutches, and are given as much food as they want, and, having eaten that, are given by force very much more than they want. This system, hideous

though it is, produces, at last, pleasant results for the epicure in food. But a similar system applied to works of art will not gratify the artistic epicure. That similar system has been applied by Mr. Pinero to " Letty ". The play is too " rich ".

Using the word in another sense, I declare Mr. Pinero himself too " rich ". It may sound paradoxical, but it is not the less true that Mr. Pinero would write better plays if he were a less richly endowed playwright. We all know the danger that lies in actual riches. We all know how the mere possession of fabulous wealth seems to crush the imagination of the millionaire, and to prevent him from regarding his means as a means to an end—except the end of empty ostentation. Tritely, by acquisition of yachts, motors, palaces, picture-galleries, grouse-moors, the millionaire seeks to dazzle us. And dazzled the majority of us is. When we are faced by an exceptional millionaire, who uses his money in pursuit of some ideal, we exchange glances and tap our foreheads significantly. Nobody, so far as I remember, accused " le petit sucrier " of being a lunatic. He scattered his gold down the customary channels, content with the flash of it, as were also we. But this other M. Lebaudy, who actually eludes our gaze, and will presently sail to a remote part of the world and try to work out an ideal—well, well, well ! poor fellow ! what a shame that he has no one to look after him ! Similarly, there would not be such a general bowing-

down to "our premier dramatist", if Mr. Pinero were less eager to dazzle us with a generous display of his perfectly-appointed technique, and more eager to illustrate simply a philosophic idea, or to develop simply a human theme. Just as do very great actual riches, so do very great dramaturgic riches seem to crush originality in their owner, and to foster ostentatiousness. A Henrik Ibsen is as rare as a Jacques Lebaudy—or (since this young man may prove to have not much in him beyond the mere power to break away from tradition) let me say, rather, a Cecil Rhodes. If Mr. Pinero were less brilliant in his specific way, there would be more room in him for ideas. As it is, there is no room at all. Mr. Archer, rather touchingly, ventures to hope that this absence of ideas is but "a transient phase of Mr. Pinero's development". As Mr. Pinero never has harboured ideas, it is rather too much to expect that he will proceed to do so now. A horse-dealer, commending the points of a pony, does not suggest that the pony is passing through "a transient phase of development" and will presently be a horse. Even so, Mr. Archer should not try to raise hopes that cannot be entertained—much less fulfilled. But, though the smooth and luscious fruit of Mr. Pinero's genius can no more prick us with underlying ideas than can thistles be gathered from grapes, there is in Mr. Pinero no lack of power for treating a human theme sincerely and fully. Mr. Pinero has a keen insight

into human nature, more especially into the nature of women. And he might create really great pictures of life if he could but forget to show off his technical skill by bedevilling, as in "Letty" he bedevils, his main theme with a glittering congeries of inessential things. Let Mr. Archer concentrate his desires, not on making Mr. Pinero think, but on making him make us feel. A good quality cannot be implanted, but you can sometimes eliminate a bad one.

The essential conflict in "Letty" is strong, and the two conflicting characters are strongly imagined and set forth. On the one hand, we see a rich and rather sentimental profligate; on the other, a very sentimental type-writer, rebellious against the shabbiness and drudgery of her existence. He is in love with her, she with him. She has wild hopes that he will marry her. The hopes are dashed: he is already married. There is another rich man, anxious to marry her; but he is definitely "a bounder", and she is vaguely "genteel". Here comes a conflict between her gentility and her desire to do nothing but wear pretty frocks. Gentility wins the day. Then comes a conflict of her inherited sense of propriety with her love of pretty frocks and her love of her lover. Shall she be mistress of the profligate? She wavers, consents, withdraws her consent. Subsequently she marries a "genteel" person in her own class, bears a child, and is fairly happy. Both she and the profligate

are quite real people, behaving quite really. Their story is in itself extremely interesting and moving. And yet, somehow, one is unmoved by it; nor has one a keen sense of the reality of the two persons. This may be partly due to the performance. Miss Irene Vanbrugh catches exactly the tone of the type-writer whom she impersonates—the tone of the partially refined Cockney, "not quite a lady", but very lady-like indeed. She suggests perfectly the girl's social aspirations; but she does not compass a suggestion that the girl is in love. All the surface is there, but not the romantic soul. Mr. H. B. Irving, as the profligate, is ardent enough, but his ardour seems to belong to another time and place. As a fashionable young man of to-day and of London, he must be taken with several grains of salt. He is too remarkable. Give him a strong and odd character part, and he can be reconciled with modern life. But as young "Mr. Nevill Letchmere", leading in a flat in Grafton Street a life of frivolity, he compels us to remember that he is really a grim visitant from Olympus. We are not quite sure which of the gods he is. (Vulcan perhaps, without the limp.) But, whichever he be of them, we are frightened. That high collar round his throat, that hat perched so jauntily upon his head, are, we feel, the work of some practical joker, and the Olympian is going to avenge himself on *us*. Outwardly, he still preserves that air of sleek humility which he learnt from the Admirable

Crichton; but we can see through it that he is raging within, and we tremble. At least, we should be trembling were not our sense of reality so outraged. Certainly, we must take his performance, and Miss Vanbrugh's, as accounting to some extent for the play's failure to give us so much illusion and emotion as we should expect from a play with so dramatic and so true a motive. But the main reason is that this motive is obscured for us by Mr. Pinero's passion for the extraneous. His skill is such that he can handle a whole mass of extraneous things with masterly ease, making them seem, at first glance, quite necessary. And that is the reason why he handles them. He must needs exercise and display his skill, perform feats of which all other men are incapable. Behold how many characters he can manipulate! Behold in how many exciting scenes he can place them without loss of verisimilitude! He will give you almost as much of the cinematographic method as can Mr. Cecil Raleigh, yet without the least strain on likelihood. Here is a fashionable restaurant, with waiters, and a manager, and different brands of champagne, and electric lights that can be switched off because it is the midnight of Saturday. And here are the leads of a housetop, with all the chimneys and the soot, and a piano-organ grinding out the latest popular tune from the street below, and a view of various steeples in the West End. And here is the anteroom of a fashionable photographer in Baker Street,

with all the details. And everything seems to be quite relevant. There was one moment, in the crucial scene of the play, when Miss Vanbrugh, rising from a sofa, inclined her body backwards and dangled her hands. I thought there was to be a cake-walk. I had been waiting for it, and I cannot understand the omission. Everything else of up-to-date actuality and "snap" is introduced so plausibly. Some of the subordinate characters, though all are amusing, are not quite so cinematographic. The tout for an insurance-agency, and the commercial traveller, seem like unpublished fragments of Dickens. The "bounder", though he is an outside broker, and is admirably played by Mr. Fred Kerr, might have stepped out of the pages of Samuel Warren, so remote is he from current reality. He is not a "bounder" but a "snob". It is strange that Mr. Pinero should have these lapses into bygone literature; for no one has a keener eye than he in studying from the models of living vulgarity. There is in this play a dressmaker's assistant whose every sentence rings phonographically true. Some of the effect produced by this part is due to the clever acting of Miss Nancy Price; but the part itself is an exquisite one, and only a pedant would grudge the author's extreme elaboration of it. One need not, however, be a pedant to deplore the elaboration of so many other things that are irrelevant to the central scheme of the play. If only, I repeat, Mr. Pinero could be

simple! Why was it that the first act of "The Finding of Nancy", wherein we had almost exactly the same situation and problem as we have in "Letty", gave us so keen an illusion of reality, and moved us to so keen a sense of pity, while "Letty" leaves us cold and critical? It is because Miss Syrett, knowing little about her specific art, went straight to life, and threw us a bit of life, for what it was worth, with no clever superfluities. After the first act, her play fell to pieces, because she had not enough technical skill to carry the tale steadily forward. But that first act, for which little technique was needed, remains with us as a clear memory. And "Letty" shrivels in the light of it. Had Miss Syrett possessed one tithe of Mr. Pinero's technical skill, "The Finding of Nancy" would have been a fine whole. And could Mr. Pinero have made over to her nine-tenths of his technical skill, "Letty" would have been a fine whole. I have likened Mr. Pinero to a plutocrat. And, as erst in Galilee, he who has "great possessions" will be loth to part with them even for his salvation. But I don't want to dash Mr. Archer's hopes.

About the literary style of "Letty" I have more to say than can be said at the fag-end of an article.

MR. PINERO'S LITERARY STYLE

October 24, 1903.

The previous instalment of my hebdomadal adventures into the variegated realm of things theatrical involved me in a consideration of that recent contribution to national dramatic art which is known by the homely but euphonious diminutive of Lætitia, and which is at this moment on public view at the playhouse whose cognomen is derived from a whilom namesake of the august deceased personage who similarly supplies a certain well-known columnal structure situate not a hundred miles from that rendezvous of the eminent, the Athenæum Club. In other words, I wrote about "Letty". But the unavoidable exigencies of that tyrannous goddess, Space, prohibited me from inquiring into, and animadverting upon, that special and particular department in the comprehensive emporium of the author's endowment which may succinctly be described as "literary style". In other words, I had not space in which to write about Mr. Pinero's literary style. I venture to surmise, however, that inasmuch as the manner in which Mr. Arthur Wing Pinero habitually wields his pen has earned for him from not a few quarters, from time to time, enthusiastic applause which is,

in my opinion, by no means entirely merited, I may be pardoned for devoting a separate article to the same. In other words, here goes.

" Here goes "! The phrase ought not to be used here. But I plead the law of reaction. One cannot parody Mr. Pinero's manner without flying across into curt colloquialism. Likewise, for any one who goes to see " Letty ", there comes—comes not long after the rising of the curtain—a time when he longs to throw things at the dramatis personæ and provoke from them a curt colloquial phrase or two, however irrelevant to the play's action. Mr. Pinero, I fancy, would be shocked by this impulse, and would have a good many long words to say about it. He would refuse to accept as establishing a desirable standard for his own professional endeavour the demands of those who are notoriously congenitally incapacitated from extracting personal gratification from the presence of literary style. Doubtless he really does think that he has literary style. Doubtless, many other innocents think so too. To clear the ground, let me begin by making him and them realise what *is* literary style, generally, and in plays particularly. Then we shall soon be agreed that Mr. Pinero hasn't it.

Generally, it is the exact expression of a writer's self through means of written words. Some people —most people—die inarticulate. A few can exactly express themselves in talk, a few in public speaking. The specific gift for conversation or for oratory is

always denied to the man who is born to express himself in writing ; for one means precludes another. Shut him in a room, with pen and ink and paper, and then only will he reveal himself. Words will come to him at his bidding, even as to some people (we know not why) birds will come. They are not shy of him, and he knows them one from another, and can make them do what he wills. His little game, like the talker's or the orator's, is self-expression ; and his material is the same as theirs, but must be very differently used. *They* can make words live, and live variously, by modulations of the voice, by movements of the hand, by facial play. These tricks are quite as apt to the purpose of self-expression as are the words themselves. But for the writer words are the all-important and the only means, and they have to be used so cunningly as to supply all that in the medium of literature is lacking. Special words, special constructions, which would be ridiculous and unmeaning from live lips, must be used for just this or that effect which from live lips could be produced. Good writing is a thing of infinite formality. Yet the formality must not reveal itself. So soon as that happens, the writing ceases to be good, becoming lifeless. Such, then, is the making of a literary style. And happy he who can compass it ! But there are pleasant and unpleasant literary styles. A man may express himself exactly, yet not please us. He is the man who lacks inward harmony,

and so cannot use his medium beautifully. The man who expresses himself both exactly and beautifully is the man for us. He, none other, is the true stylist.

So much for the matter at large. Now come and determine with me what is literary style in that particular kind of writer, the dramatist. Obviously, it must be something very different, so very different are the conditions. The dramatist writes words not to be read, but to be spoken, and to be spoken not by himself for self-expression, but by other human beings for expression of certain puppets. From the first of these two differences it follows that the words must be far easier, more colloquial and familiar, than the words of the ordinary writer. In poetic drama, of course, where one has already the convention of metre, license is given for elaborate dignity in words. But even here is made a reservation. There must be a tincture of oral style throughout the speeches. The exact nature of this difference is not easy to explain. Perhaps you can grasp it best by a comparison of the style in Shakespeare's sonnets with the style in his dramatic soliloquies. However, I am dealing here more particularly with style in those modern realistic plays of which "Letty" is one. The first essential is that the persons must speak in the manner of human beings. Or rather, they must *seem* to be speaking in that manner. For human beings talk so irrelevantly, so raggedly, so much, that a verbatim reproduction

would be quite dreadful: the play would never end, nor should we know what it was all about. Selections, compressions, sharpenings, are all needful. But they must be made inobtrusively. We must not be conscious that the characters are not wasting the breath that would certainly be wasted if they were real. And not only must every character talk like a real person: they must all talk like different persons. So that, whereas in ordinary writing style is the perfect expression of the writer's self, in plays it is the perfect expression of various selves. But not that only. Just as in ordinary writing true style is a beautiful thing in itself, so in drama the true stylist will make his characters talk beautifully. This is a hard saying, perhaps, in relation to the law which I have been laying down. But, hard though it be, you must receive it. Human beings, doubtless, are not more apt to talk beautifully than to talk expressively and to the point. But, just as the persons of a play can be kept expressively to the point, so can they be made to use musical cadences, with no loss of verisimilitude. The trick is difficult. But it can be performed. And the dramatists by whom it cannot be performed must not be hailed as stylists.

Now, when a writer of books takes it into his head to write a play, his characters, almost inevitably, talk like his books. If his books happen to be permeated with style, the result may be charming, but it is not the less wrong. He is not a stylist

" ad hoc ". His style is " matter out of place ", and should be swept away. It would be all very well if his characters talked like various books and were dramatic embodiments of various literary ladies and gentlemen. For you will find that literary persons always talk in a literary way. Accordingly, they are not good talkers, in the strict sense. Their manner clashes with their medium. Listening, you would much rather write down the spoken words and read them at your leisure. Their talk is, indeed, a form of dictation. So is the talk of journalists—of busy journalists, at least. Suppose that all the characters in " Letty " were very busy journalists, all on the staff of one very inferior provincial daily paper, Mr. Pinero might be credited with a certain measure of literary style. We could congratulate him on having got so far as to make his characters talk as they would in real life. You see I have already plunged from the abstract into the personal side of our inquiry. I am sorry to have let the horrid truth out so abruptly; but there it is: Mr. Pinero's " literary style " is nothing but the lowest and most piteous kind of journalese.

After all, my attempt at parody had prepared you for that truth. Let a few quotations from " Letty " now drive it home. A visitor to Mr. Letchmere's flat complains of the heat. " My man," says the host, " has been neglecting to lower the sun-blinds." What a ghastly equivalent for " my man hasn't pulled down the blinds "! He complains to the

valet: "This room is as hot as Hell." "Not quite so hot as that, I think, Sir." "We will not discuss that now. You will have ample opportunity for testing the truth of that simile at some future date." Mr. Letchmere, sending the valet to bed: "I shall require nothing further." Invited to join a supper party: "let no one be incommoded." Reassuring a lady who overhears a quarrel: "These little differences are invariably settled amicably." Very angry: "The result, now that I view it closely, is none the more palatable." I dare not quote longer instances of Mr. Letchmere's manner (which is also the manner of all but the intentionally comic persons in the play): those which I remember seem so grotesque that I may not have remembered them accurately. I wish to be quite just to Mr. Pinero. But I think I have quoted enough to show that no tempering with mercy, however gently rain-like and thrice blest, could prevent justice from condemning him to perpetual banishment among the penny-a-liners from whom his style is borrowed. Nay, these penny-a-liners have an excuse that cannot be pleaded by him. They are paid by the line. They live by the length and number of their words, whose quality matters not at all. Mr. Pinero just receives a "royalty" for every performance of his play. His style is, therefore, penny-a-lining for penny-a-lining's sake. Rather a monstrous anomaly, that, is it not?

THE CRITIC AS PARIAH

October 31, 1903.

We are not liked, we critics. The creators of art do not like us, nor do the men in the street. And why not? Let us probe. To account for a misfortune is to purge away half its bitterness.

We may be divided roughly into two schools: the ancient, or academic, and the modern or temperamental. Of course, these two classes overlap. No man, however steeped in academicism, can quite rid himself of his own prejudices and predilections. No man, however intent on making the most of his own egoism, can keep himself unspotted from the world of ready-made judgments and classifications in which he has been reared. Still the distinction is real and useful. Let us separately consider the two distinct schools from the two distinct standpoints of artist and man in the street.

Whereas the temperamentals are newcomers, the academics have been with us for centuries, and the prejudice against them is accordingly easier to analyse. Our literature—every literature, indeed—teems with denunciations of them by artists. Often these denunciations have been merely outcomes of wounded vanity. But there is underlying most of them a wider and deeper sentiment. We find there

the contempt felt by the man who can do something, and does it, for the man who cannot do it, but does talk a lot about it. We find, also, the wrath of the doer, who works in passionate concentration on one kind of thing, against the arrogant outsider who just comes along and glances at the result, and gives it a good or bad mark in relation to a host of other things beyond this doer's ken. Both the wrath and the contempt are very natural feelings, surely. "You think it good? Confound your impudence. You think it bad? Go and do it yourself." That is for the artist an inevitable attitude. Of course, it is a wrong attitude. No one should ever say "yah". If the academic critic could do the thing half so well as the artist, he would be accordingly less capable of wide appreciation. It is his impotence that keeps his taste in proper working order. But the artist, who knows his taste in his own work to be much finer than the critic's, and cares not a rap about taste in other kinds of work, cannot be expected to make the just allowance. As for the men in the street, they may be anxious to learn from the critic. But a thirst for learning does not involve a love for the teacher. Ever since the schoolmaster stood revealed by the lifting of the dark ages, his name has been a bye-word for unpopularity. Nor have the little pupils in his charge more cordially disliked him and his rough-and-ready, cut-and-dried authority than have the quite adult and independent observers of him.

And he, after all, is not lording it over the makers of the facts which he teaches. He does not indicate the line of attack or defence which Cicero ought to have taken in his conduct of this or that lawsuit. He is not down on the technique of Sophocles. He asks you to tell him the capital of Russia : he does not tell you what city ought, in his own very final opinion, to be the Russian capital. If he went on in that way he would soon be hounded from his own form-room. The academic critic does habitually go on in that way ; hence the impulse, as irresistible in the average man as in the artist, to bid him go and do something himself and then let us see what it looks like. I think that this contemptuous impulse is shared, in some degree, by the very critic himself. He is confronted with a work of art which he knows to be bad, and which he promptly shows to be bad. The exercise may exhilarate him ; but all the while a still small voice is whispering in his ear, " You couldn't have done it so well yourself. You hadn't the pluck or talent even to attempt it." He tosses his head, and " Pshaw ! " he says, " the other fellow would be equally incapable of writing this criticism. It is a piece of very admirable criticism. It is a very fine work of creative art. I am every bit as creative as the other fellow." This theory of the creativeness of criticism is strongly upheld by Mr. Walkley in his delightful treatise, " Dramatic Criticism ". It is a very specious and comfortable theory. Up to a certain point, it is a

quite true theory. I agree that "criticism, like any other art, is a mode of self-expression", and, like any other art, "a channel for the communication of ideas and emotions between man and man". The critic, like the mime or the player of a musical instrument, has a right to be called creative. Virtue comes out of him. But it does not do so of its own accord. The critic has to be wound up from the outside. And thus he is not so creatively a creator as the artist whose work is his theme. He is on a lower plane. Therefrom he may tower higher than the man on the plane above him. Even so, a lay-brother in a monastery may be much fuller of faith and good works than some of the regular monks; yet he sits below the salt, and his place imposes on him a sense of inferiority. The critic suffers from just that sense, and with better reason. To lull it, he gives himself airs. Less wonder, then, that the rest of the world can't abide him.

The greater part of what I have been saying is as applicable to the case of temperamental critics as to the case of academic critics. Both schools are disliked because they consist of talkers rather than doers. But though the temperamentals do more than the academics, and though they have not that fatal affinity to schoolmasters, they are not less disliked both by artists and by men in the street. Why is this? Of course, an artist likes (in a condescending way) the critic to whose temperament his work happens to appeal truly. But

there are many kinds of temperament, and one artist's work cannot truly appeal to more than one of these. Therefore, every artist can tolerate only one kind of temperamental critic. The rest he dislikes. The reason why one and all are disliked by the man in the street is that they are professedly selfish. It is something in their favour that they do not wish to instruct other people; but it is not less heavily against them that they wish merely to amuse themselves. Their pleasure is in determining "the exact quality of pleasure" derived by them from this or that work. Incidentally, they may help their fellow-creatures towards a similar pleasure. But that is not their aim. They have an abstract air — an air of self-sufficiency. From Walter Pater and Anatole France downwards, they have a way of smiling to themselves and talking under their breath. They might be nicknamed "the Hornerists" of literature. You need no more exact description of Pater or France than that he sits in a corner, eating a Christmas pie, and puts in his thumb, and pulls out a plum, and says "What a good boy am I!" As with the masters, so with the disciples. They seem quietly greedy, and not anxious to share. Thus the possible exquisiteness of their palate does not affect your disapproval of them. To a perfect cook you are grateful, but not to the solitary consumer of a perfect dish. Very similar is the difference between your attitudes to the creative artist and to the temperamental critic.

Of course, if you would pause to think, you would have to admit that the creative artist is as self-centred as the temperamental critic. He likes your applause, but it is not to please you that he writes. And, even as from his work, so can you, and do you, derive pleasure from the work of the temperamental critic. But it is quite natural that you should harbour an unreasonable prejudice against himself. So many unreasonable things are natural. All natural things are tainted with unreason.

"THE TEMPEST"

November 7, 1903.

Over certain of the plays of Shakespeare broods darkly the superstition that they don't "act well". Whenever a manager dashes in, undaunted by this shadow, and produces one of these plays, we are startled to find that the play does act very well indeed. "Julius Cæsar", "King John", "Richard II.", "A Midsummer Night's Dream", were all of them, within recent years, regarded as forlorn hopes. "The Tempest" was in like case. More artistically compact, and therefore more modern, in form than any other Shakespearean play, it was yet scouted as apt only to "the study". True, Mr. Benson had it in his repertory (as, indeed, he had also two, at least, of those other plays which I have named). But somehow, admirable though they are in many ways, Mr. Benson's productions do not make a sharp and durable impression. They are enjoyed, but not cherished in recollection. Though Mr. Benson proved to London, two or three years ago, that "The Tempest" was apt to the stage, the lesson, conclusive at the moment, has been forgotten. Here comes Mr. J. H. Leigh, to teach it again. But do not run away with (or rather from) the idea that Mr. Leigh is a mere

educationist. The unfamiliarity of his name, and the deviousness of his venue (the Court Theatre), and the report that his cast is recruited from an histrionic academy, might make you—probably *have* made you—a trifle shy and suspicious. Courage! Hold not back! Press boldly on to Sloane Square! For Mr. Leigh's production is quite vivid and pretty, quite untainted by pedantry. Some of my colleagues have called it a compromise between the spectacular method and the method of the Elizabethan Stage Society. That fosters a false impression. To the method of Mr. Poel (quem, I hasten to add, honoris causa nomino) there is not in Mr. Leigh's method the faintest affinity. The play is treated here, not as a dead thing, at which in its shroud we may be permitted to peer, but as a live and kicking organism, as a thing visible from a modern standpoint, susceptible to a modern method—in fact, as a classic, in the true and full sense. The method is not the less spectacular because the spectacle has to be on a small scale. No vast sums of money could be forthcoming for a venture of this kind; but there has been no stint of taste and ingenuity. From so small a stage as the Court's we cannot gain that illusion of airy distance which we need for a full sense of the mysterious island. But the scene-painter has done his best, and a very decent best it is. The fairies and nymphs and other spirits cannot swarm here, as ideally they would; but we behold very respect-

able samples of them. In one sense, the smallness of the stage is a positive gain for us. Against the advantages of a very big stage must be set always this defect: the characters become less than life-size, and thus shed much of their proper dignity and importance. To atone for their tininess, the mimes proceed to make terrific efforts, talking at a far higher pitch, forcing their feet to take far longer strides, and their hands to make far more comprehensive arabesques, than can be reconciled with the true expression of nature. They cease to be men and women impersonating men and women. They seem rather like a multiplied incarnation of the frog in the fable. Of course, there are mimes in whom the effort is not painfully apparent; but the effort is always there, a drag on the art of acting; and from the purely physical standpoint, there is not a single mime who can make the right effect, for giants find it more lucrative to be exhibited singly in side-shows than to take their chance on the legitimate stage. On a very big stage the fairies at Prospero's command would be of exactly the right size. At the Court they are of the wrong, the human, size. But Prospero himself is of the human, the right, size. And that is the more important point, surely. Sprites are nearer to humanity than is the gravely predominant Prospero to spritedom.

It is mainly from Prospero that "The Tempest" draws for us its peculiar interest and fascination. Of course, its technical difference, to which I have

alluded, is an interesting and fascinating point. Here, one might say is the least Shakespearean of all Shakespeare's plays. For what is the salient thing about Shakespeare? Surely, the careless exuberance, the headlong impatience, of his art. Like the age in which he wrote, he was essentially young. In the heat of his creative power, he cared not at all—could not pause to bother—how he expressed himself. Everything came out anyhow, shot by blind and irresistible impulse. Consider that debauch of uncontrolled fancy, "A Midsummer Night's Dream". With it "The Tempest" is often bracketed, by reason of the supernatural element in either play. But the two are at opposite poles. The one is a debauch, the other a work of art. True lovers of Shakespeare must needs prefer the debauch. "The Tempest" seems by comparison, cold and calculating. One misses the headiness, the mad magic, of the youthful work. The divinely-overdone poetry has been chastened and straightened into something akin with prose. We have been transported from Thebes to Athens. Or say, we have passed from the rose of dawn into the twilight of evening. Yes, "The Tempest" is essentially the work of an elder. And for that very reason it seems, as I suggested, so modern. Art triumphs only over impoverished vitality. The reason why modern artists are so artistic is that they are not overwhelmed with a surplusage of emotions and ideas. They can practise restraint

only because they have little to restrain. So it was with Shakespeare, when, before letting fall the pen from his hand, he wrote "The Tempest". Yet of all his plays "The Tempest" is not only the most artistic, but also the most original. I say "yet", for a paradox must be broken gently, that its truth be accepted. "Therefore" were the right conjunction. Not in the heat of creativeness are artists ever original. Having so much to give forth, and being by that impulse so pressed for time, they snatch at the handiest means. Into ready-made moulds they can pour quicklier their genius. In fact, like other spendthrifts, they will beg, borrow, or steal. But their unscrupulousness comes of wealth, not of poverty. That is the paradox, and the tragedy, at the root of all great literature. In some other planet there may be, but never will be in ours, a great writer expressing the full vigour of his greatness in his own way, and with exquisite care. An artistic conscience, and the desire for originality—a desire bred of self-consciousness and pride—will find entrance only when the breast shall have been eased of its tumultuous and surging contents. I have called "The Tempest" the least Shakespearean of Shakespeare's plays. It is that because into it Shakespeare put more of himself than into any other. Generation after generation of German and other commentators has been groping dustily, fustily, mustily, for "the sources" of this play. Every other play has been tracked down to

the place it was filched from. "The Tempest" alone is unproven a theft. Mustily, fustily, dustily, the commentators are groping, everywhere, still, at this moment. But their labour is in vain, I think. I think the reason why this one story has not been tracked down to Italy or elsewhere is that Shakespeare invented this one story. Enchanting though it is, perhaps it is not in itself a great story. But as an allegory it is perfect. Obviously, Shakespeare, at the close of his career, wished to write an epilogue to his work, an autobiography, in allegorical form. That was a very natural wish. And what more natural than that he could not lay hands on any ready-made story whereby to symbolise his meaning? And what more natural than that he should proceed to evolve from his own brain, now at leisure for the task, a story after his own less quickly-pulsing heart? The very difference in form, the neat unity, of "The Tempest" may be taken as internal evidence that here the poet was working untrammelled from without. Though age had checked his diffuseness in other plays, too, "The Tempest" is the only one that satisfies the modern standard of art. And age, alone, is not enough to account for the singularity.

To impersonate Prospero is a solemn and difficult task for any actor. He has to impress us, not merely as a rightful Duke, endowed with supernatural powers, and now quitting his enchanted place of exile for his native duchy, but also as

Shakespeare, retiring from dramatic authorship into privacy and leisure. By the way, I ought to have qualified my assertion that the allegory is perfect. The island is a perfect symbol for the theatre. Ariel is a perfect symbol for the genius which had served Shakespeare to weave his spells and was now to be hard-worked no more. Caliban (beyond his merely topical symbolism for the Virginian as slave) is a perfect symbol for the "groundlings" whom Shakespeare, having tried in vain to elevate them, was glad to leave in untroubled possession of the theatre. But one does not see why Shakespeare, a bourgeois, relapsing to obscurity from the sphere in which his genius had shone so lustrously, should sneer so persistently at his own "rough magic", and at theatrical art in general, and should imply that he is returning to a nobler and worthier sphere. Had he been, besides a dramatist, a master of scientific philosophy, believing, like Bacon, that "it is not good to stay long in the theatre", and had he, as had Bacon . . . but I am treading on a volcano, and I will not risk that eruption of fury which immediately overwhelms any definite refusal to treat a still open question as settled for ever. Enough that he who impersonates Prospero impersonates also the creator of Prospero, and that so we need of him a double dignity and weight. Mr. Acton Bond acts in a scholarly and charming way, and has enough authority to carry him well through the part of Prospero proper. But he does not quite

satisfy our hunger for a realisation of Prospero's creator. Mr. Leigh himself plays Caliban, and is duly "savage", but ought surely to be more "deformed". Miranda, that extremist among ingénues, loses nothing by Mrs. Leigh's interpretation of her, and Mr. Charles Lander speaks well the lines of Ferdinand. Ariel is less lucky. Better the suggestion of a mere human being, however helpless, than of a pantomime fairy, however capable.

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